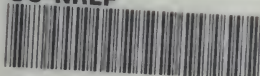


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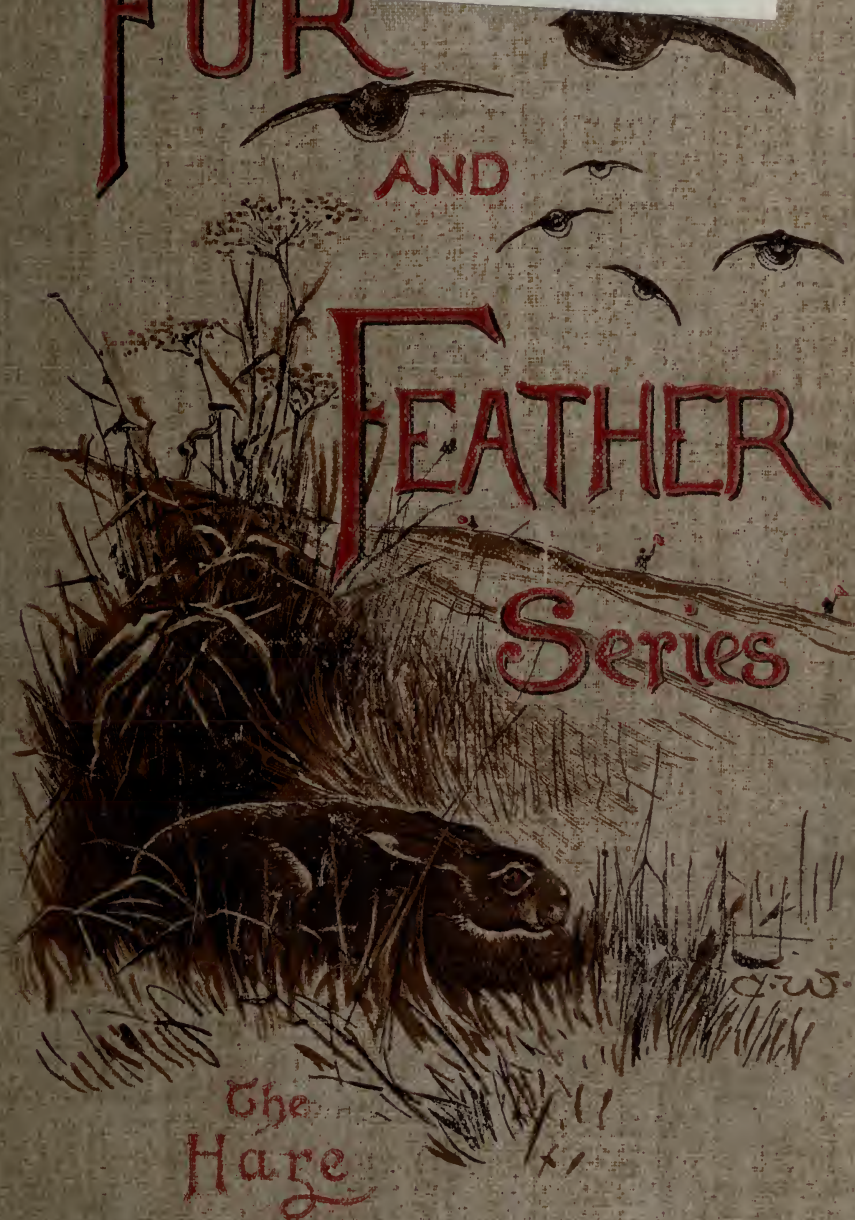
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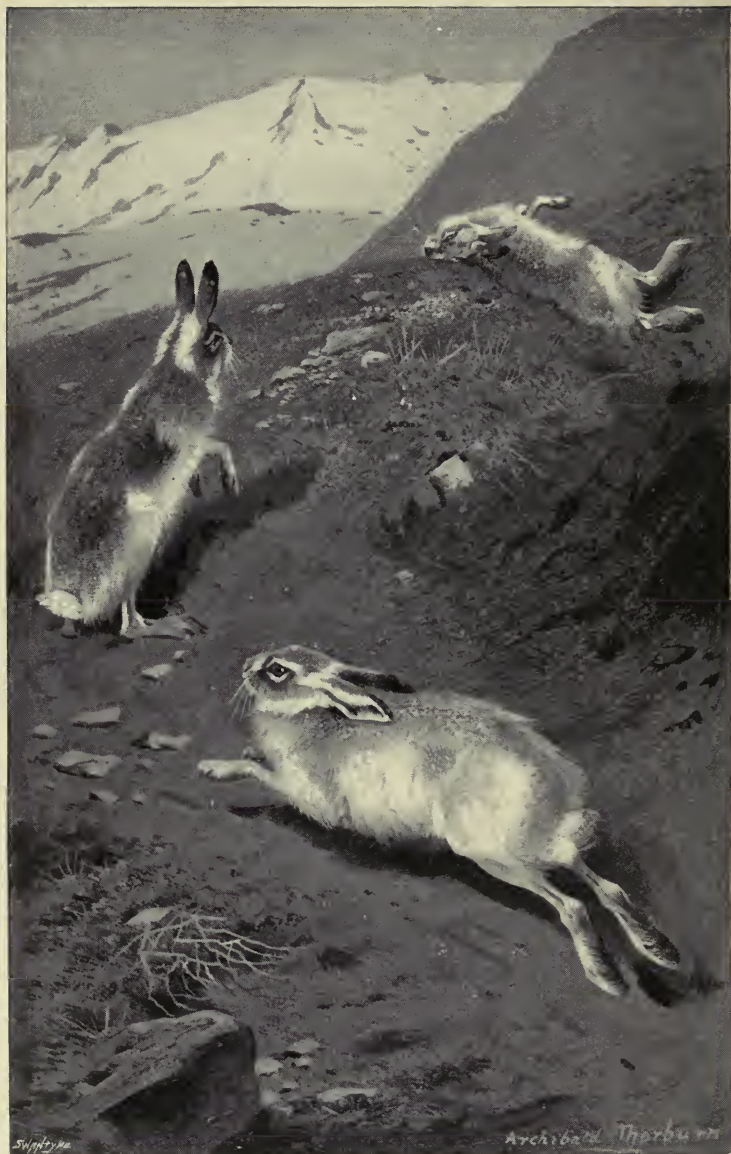
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'A HARE DRIVE'

# THE HARE

*NATURAL HISTORY*

BY THE REV. H. A. MACPHERSON

*SHOOTING*

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## P R E F A C E

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THE design of the *Fur and Feather Series* is to present monographs, as complete as they can possibly be made, on the various English birds and beasts which are generally included under the head of Game.

Books on Natural History cover such a vast number of subjects that their writers necessarily find it impossible to deal with each in a really comprehensive manner; and it is not within the scope of such works exhaustively to discuss the animals described, in the light of objects of sport. Books on sport, again, seldom treat at length of the Natural History of the furred and feathered creatures which are shot or otherwise taken; and, so far as the Editor is aware, in no book hitherto published on Natural History or Sport has information been given as to the best methods of turning the contents of the bag to account.

## PREFACE

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Each volume of the present Series will, therefore, be devoted to a bird or beast, and will be divided into three parts. The Natural History of the variety will first be given ; it will then be considered from the point of view of sport ; and the writer of the third division will assume that the creature has been carried to the larder, and will proceed to discuss it gastronomically. The origin of the animals will be traced, their birth and breeding described, every known method of circumventing and killing them—not omitting the methods employed by the poacher—will be explained with special regard to modern developments, and they will only be left when on the table in the most appetising forms which the delicate science of cookery has discovered.

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ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

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# NATURAL HISTORY OF THE HARE

BY THE

REV. H. A. MACPHERSON



## CHAPTER I

### STUDIES IN HARE LIFE

THE common brown hare has long been associated with the happiest traditions of English sport. Its presence on the countryside has served to draw all classes together, and contributed in no small degree to the maintenance of mutual sympathies. Nor is this true of British sportsmen alone. No doubt Englishmen are the sportsmen of the world, but our Continental neighbours entertain a friendly rivalry with the Saxon, and the number of hares which are annually killed at big drives in Austria represent enormous figures, beside which statistics of our English sport are dwarfed into sorry insignificance. The question naturally arises, To what countries is the brown hare really indigenous? It is not a native of Ireland. The fact is a little surprising at first sight, but appears less astonishing when we remember how deficient that island is in mammalian life. Elsewhere

in Europe the brown hare seems to be at home in all the more temperate countries. It shows a decided aversion to damp climates, thriving best in a moderately dry atmosphere. The high mountains and bleak plateaus of Central and Northern Europe are naturally ill adapted to the constitution of the brown hare. Accordingly this animal is replaced in elevated or inclement regions by the blue or variable hare, which contrives to pick up a living in the most desolate and forbidding districts. It is this animal which takes the place of the brown hare in Ireland. Some naturalists have separated the Irish variety of the variable hare from the typical form, but it is questionable whether such a step can be considered prudent. As for the brown hare, it must be said that considerable differences exist between examples obtained in Northern and Southern Europe. I have not been able to investigate this point personally. Mr. Oldfield Thomas tells me that no adequate material for study as yet exists at the Natural History Museum. In the absence of a fresh series, we are thrown back upon the conclusions of Blasius, who investigated the subject some years ago. The skins which he examined had been obtained from different parts of Europe. Their study induced him to believe that we should recognise three distinct races of the brown hare. Of these,

the form with which Englishmen are least acquainted is the hare of North-east Europe. This animal possesses fur of a thick texture, and shows a tendency to become white in winter, a circumstance which might be expected to enhance the chance of its escaping from its enemies during severe weather, such as is often experienced in Russia. The central race, which includes our English hare, is characterised by the possession of fur of moderate texture. It shows a disposition to become grey in winter. To find the third race of brown hare recognised by the German specialist just quoted it is necessary to go to the extreme south of Europe. This hare of the Mediterranean sub-region differs from the animal we know so well at home in the relative thinness of its pelage. Its ears are but scantily clothed with fur. It is a redder animal than our hare. Mr. Abel Chapman says that it is more brindled in colour than our insular form. Another point of distinction lies in the inferior size of the Mediterranean hare.

Sportsmen are always interested in the weight of game. The average weight of a hare often serves as a topic for conversation in the gunroom. A full-grown animal in good condition generally turns the scales at seven or eight pounds. Plenty of hares weigh nine and ten pounds, but it is a very big hare

indeed that reaches eleven pounds. Enormous hares have been killed in rare instances.

By this I mean to say that individual hares have undoubtedly scaled between thirteen and fourteen pounds. But these were over-fed monsters, which had glutted their carcasses to repletion. Now the Mediterranean hare only averages from five to six pounds when full grown. It is, therefore, obviously inferior in bulk to the typical animal. I have not been able to obtain the weights of any Russian hares. Those which are killed in Central Europe appear to be about the same size as our own hares. Professor Fatio, for instance, writes that in Switzerland the brown hares average from eight to ten pounds apiece. He has known of larger specimens. Some of them weighed as much as twelve pounds, but these, of course, were remarkable. The weight of the hare, like that of almost any animal, depends a good deal on the season of the year, and on the relative abundance or paucity of food. It is generally held to be in the finest condition in late autumn and early winter. Nature has ordained that the hare should become fat and well nourished in the fall of the year, in order that it may be the better fitted to endure the hardships and privations to which it is exposed in the depth of winter. Nevertheless, some hares are in

prime condition in the summer months. One would imagine that the brown hare should thrive well on the fat pastures of the north of Ireland ; perhaps the fact that the Irish hare already holds the field may be adverse to the successful naturalisation of the former animal. The brown hare has no incapacity for adapting its life to altered conditions. To my mind, the success which has attended the introduction of the brown hare into New Zealand is a very remarkable fact. Who would have imagined that hares would ever become numerous enough in our distant colony to render the exportation of their skins to the mother country a profitable undertaking ? Perhaps Irish sportsmen are contented to possess the varying hare, and have no ambition to see the finer animal naturalised in their distressful country. Mr. Barrett Hamilton, who is making a special study of the quadrupeds of Ireland, has been good enough to inform me that some isolated attempts have been made to establish the brown hare in his own country. He says that the experiments that have been made have so far proved disappointing. The brown hare certainly manages to exist in certain private parks in Ireland, but it has not so far succeeded in extending its range in that island as a truly wild animal. Though absent from Ireland as an indigenous mammal, the

brown hare has long been plentiful on the mainland of Scotland. Many parts of Northern Britain are covered with waste moorlands, too sterile and barren to afford a happy home to the bonny brown hare, which has no taste for dry lichens and plain Highland fare, but prefers to munch sweet clover in the fattest pastures of the low grounds. It was not indigenous to any of the Hebrides, nor probably to the Orkneys or Shetlands. The first attempt to populate the Hebrides with brown hares was made by Lord Seaforth. About a hundred years ago that nobleman introduced some brown hares to the Lews. But his example was not followed by any of his neighbours. It was not until the middle of the present century that hares were introduced into Skye and other neighbouring islands. The actual result has fully justified the pains bestowed upon their introduction, and the species thrives admirably in sheltered situations. It is, therefore, quite certain that the climatic conditions prevailing on the West coast of Scotland are on the whole favourable to this animal. As regards Orkney, it would appear to be certain that the brown hare was long ago turned down upon the Island of Hoy—before, in fact, it had been carried to the Lews—but the first experiment does not seem to have met with the success that it merited. Messrs. Buckley

and Harvie Brown report that there are brown hares on several of the northern isles, viz. upon Hoy, Eday, Rousay, Shapinsay, the Mainland, and on South Ronaldshay.

The hare was introduced to the last-named island by Lord Zetland. There used to be some hares in Papa Westray, but the animals have been exterminated by the natives. Mr. Moodie-Heddle considers that some of the brown hares which are killed in Orkney bear an external resemblance to the blue hare in her summer pelage. The hares in question appear to be darker than the hares of the Scottish mainland, and lack the rich reddish-brown tint of the parent race. In Sutherlandshire, Caithness, and some other Scottish counties the brown hare occurs most frequently in the fertile straths and upon the alluvial plains, seldom evincing any desire to wander very far from the borders of the cultivated regions, in which she prefers to make a permanent residence. But the elevation to which the brown hare voluntarily ascends in this country still requires to be investigated. In the North of England the brown hare rambles all over the fells at her sweet will. Country folk will tell you that the hare which is bred upon the pastures of the mountain-side is a larger-boned animal than her sister of the valley. If there is any truth in this tradition, the

brown hare of the hills is presumably learning to adapt herself to the altered conditions of her existence, which no doubt entails greater exertion than is necessary to the hare which makes its home in the hayfields of the wooded manor. Dr. Fatio has ascertained that the brown hare of the Swiss valleys ranges upon the slopes of the Alpine pastures up to an elevation of 1,600 or 1,700 mètres. In the Grisons, Professor Theobald killed a brown hare at a greater elevation still, viz. at a height of 2,270 mètres above the sea.

We must all have met with the bonnie brown hare in a great variety of situations, from the Kentish and Essex salt marshes to the wolds of Yorkshire and the coalfields of Lancashire. A great change has taken place in the number of hares that are annually bred in England. Go where you may, one meets almost universally with the same lament, that where you would formerly have seen twenty or thirty hares feeding in the fields on a summer evening you will now hardly see a single animal. This melancholy state of things seems to have been brought about mainly by the mischievous and uncalled-for legislation of Sir William Harcourt. There are other factors which may or may not press hardly upon the hare. One obvious point is that hares and rabbits do not thrive very

well together. The smaller animal defiles the hare's pasturage, for the hare is a fastidious feeder, and will not willingly feed where rabbits have been. The rabbit is as audacious as it is erotic, and has no fear of the hare, which it often bullies and hounds off its favourite grounds. I feel little or no doubt that in some cases the disappearance of the hare is due to the hostility of the rabbit.

Another and more important condition to be considered in determining the number of hares is the presence or absence of disease. I have not found the brown hare to be as susceptible either to wet or to diseases born of hunger as the rabbit undoubtedly is. Certainly rumours of English hares dying from lung disease reached me from an estate in the North of England a few years ago ; but I had no opportunity of ascertaining whether the complaint was well founded or not. That the hare is peculiarly liable to a species of consumption, however, there can be no doubt, because it has been proved up to the hilt. Thus, in the autumn of 1882, a great many hares died in the district of Eisvold, in Norway. The cause of the deaths of these animals was inquired into by Professor Heiberg, of Christiania. His researches resulted in the discovery that the air passages and pulmonary substance of the deceased animals were charged with

a form of *Strongylus*, both barren and charged with ova.<sup>1</sup> Still more recently this important matter has been explored by an eminent French pathologist, M. Mégnin. This gentleman was induced to turn his attention to the question in consequence of the outbreak of a severe epidemic among brown hares in Alsace. Subsequently he read a paper on the subject before the Paris Biological Society, in which he diagnosed this leporine disorder as a parasitic disease, a sort of pulmonary tuberculosis, in fact. It was due to the presence of *Strongylus commutatus* in the lungs of the affected animals.<sup>2</sup> It is said that a great many hares succumbed to the ravages of the same disease in Thuringia, in the year 1864. That such a contagious disease may in a large measure account for the scarcity of hares is perfectly true. If the fact that the hare is subject to a malady like this was more widely known, perhaps we should often hear of somewhat similar outbreaks. The best remedy for such a disaster would, I imagine, be to destroy all affected animals, and, after a time, to introduce an entirely new strain of blood into the district. We know very little about the diseases from which wild animals suffer. In confinement their maladies are connected more

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, vol. xxix. p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Zoologist*, 1887, p. 424.

or less with improper feeding and want of adequate exercise and fresh air ; and these disorders can be overcome by patience and trouble. But I never yet met anyone who had devoted special attention to the investigation of the diseases which affect our smaller wild animals.

The topic seems to suggest fresh fields for skilled research. This is only one, however, of the many bypaths to be followed by the votaries of science. Very few of us have adequate opportunities of conducting such serious experiments as those just suggested ; but we can all of us find an unlimited source of amusement in studying the natural traits of wild animals. There may not be much of importance to discover in the habits of the hare. Yet I question whether anyone could devote a few weeks to patient observation of a single species of quadruped without obtaining a corresponding amount of pleasure. Men often neglect to study the habits of the birds or beasts which live around them, simply because, they say, 'they are so common.' Almost every bird or beast *is* common *somewhere* ; but its abundance or scarcity is of minor importance to the true naturalist. What he aims at is to catch the spirit of the woods, to watch silently every movement of the woodpecker that is boring in the old timber, to catch the sibilant cry

of the crested tit, or to follow the graceful movements of the squirrels as they playfully chase their fellows through the green leaves. If we try to study nature unaffectedly, and start with a wholesome knowledge of our own crass ignorance, we can find plenty of diversion even in working out the habits of such a familiar beast as the brown hare. Although popularly supposed to live exclusively under an open sky, the hare has a strong partiality for the vicinity of covert, to which she often repairs for shelter at the break of day. The wild, free life of the woods is entirely to the taste of the hare. She likes to bound joyously along, unimpeded by the fear of impending disaster ; for at the best she is a shy and timid creature, little able to protect her delicate frame from the onslaught of ancestral foes. The amorous character of the hare is well marked. The male sex is generally in numerical excess ; to this circumstance are due the bloodless conflicts in which jack hares are accustomed to engage at the beginning of the mating time. The males fight with their feet, and make the down of their opponents fly freely. They are especially interested in the duties of reproduction during the month of March, at which time they are unusually playful and full of antics ; hence the proverb, ' As mad as a March hare.' Practical men are not agreed as



'AS MAD AS MARCH HARES'



to the *number* of leverets produced by the hare in the year. A friend of mine, who has opened a great many doe hares, assures me that only a single leveret is usually produced at a birth. Others consider that it is only young female hares of the year that drop single young ones ; and they contend that old hares drop two or three leverets not uncommonly. Five is, apparently, the maximum of leverets ever dropped by English hares ; but the reproduction of a greater number is not impossible.

The rates at which most wild animals and birds increase seem to be governed in the main by their relative food supplies. These, taken together with the difficulties which such individuals have had to overcome, before they succeeded in propagating their own kind, enable us to anticipate, however imperfectly, their probable numbers. Colonel Fielden found that the Polar hare produces no fewer than eight young ones. This remarkable circumstance may be explained by the relatively abundant supply of food during a brief Arctic summer. A stern necessity also exists that many individuals should enter the world, since the young leverets are eagerly sought after by their natural enemy, the Arctic fox. But be this as it may, our English hare is usually satisfied to multiply her race on a more modest scale. The doe, if adult,

reproduces young two or three times in a season, generally dropping a single young one, but often two, and sometimes three. Young doe hares which enter the world in March seem to reproduce young in the following July or August. Those which are born in late autumn give birth to young ones only in the following year ; at least, such is my belief, but it is difficult to lay down any hard-and-fast rules as to the gestation of wild animals. The subject is exceedingly obscure and has not been fully ventilated. Even if wild animals reproduce their own kind in confinement (which they often persistently fail to do), it would still be doubtful if the gestation of the females kept under artificial conditions could be relied upon to correspond in all particulars with the similar period passed in a state of absolute freedom. Bell says that in mild winters young hares have been found in January. A few leverets are undoubtedly dropped in February, especially after those open winters which encourage the old ones to couple early. Some people consider it unusual to find leverets in March. Mr. Algernon E. Perkins recorded in the *Field* a nest of five young leverets which his keeper found in Norfolk on April 25. Mr. Richard Rice wrote from Berkshire, to say that he saw a dead leveret in a sheep pen on March 8. It had been killed by cold weather ; snow

was lying on the ground at the time. Mr. J. G. Cornish volunteered his experience that many leverets of the size of full-grown rabbits are to be seen in Dorsetshire in the middle of April. 'Even in exposed down-country,' he says, 'they are frequently born before March 1. The second week in March is the time when we generally expect to find them ; but in mild winters I have known of does in young at the beginning of January. With regard to the number of leverets in a litter, there is a curious belief among the countrymen in Berks and Wilts. If a leveret has a white star on its forehead, it is certain to be one of a litter of four, they say.'<sup>1</sup> Another correspondent (T. W. P.) wrote to express his belief that 'the white spot on the forehead of a leveret indicates a buck. I have examined many hares and leverets with regard to this small spot, and have never found one on a doe, and have never seen a buck without one. I have only once known a litter of five leverets. They were a very fine litter, and could be seen almost every evening about the same spot following the doe, and by the first week in May they were nearly as large as she was. My opinion is that (in Lincolnshire) most of the early leverets breed in July and August, but these late

<sup>1</sup> *Field*, May 14, 1892.

leverets do not breed nearly so fast as those kittled in March, April, and May.’<sup>1</sup>

Here I may observe that the hare makes her nest in a tuft of grass or rough herbage, carefully concealed from prying eyes by the stems which she is artful enough to pull over it. It is frequently placed in a pasture field, and almost always in a dry situation, often on a knoll of ground slightly elevated above the level of the rest of the field. The doe is a good parent, but she does not usually suckle her young by day, preferring to nurse the tiny leverets under cover of darkness. These latter are fairly hardy and can be reared by hand without difficulty. The domestic cat is sometimes used as a foster-mother for leverets. ‘When shooting in Hampshire on the 15th September,’ writes Mr. Wm. Houghton, I killed a doe hare out of a small piece of turnips, and shortly afterwards found near the same spot three small leverets. Wishing to save their lives, I enquired in the neighbourhood for a cat with kittens, and soon after found one with four, about the same age as the leverets—I should say about a week old. Removing three of the kittens, I substituted the young hares, which the cat has taken to kindly, and when I left a few days after they were getting on nicely. Having understood that if more

<sup>1</sup> *Field*, May 28, 1892.

than two leverets are produced at a birth, one of them is always marked with a spot or stripe of white in the forehead, I examined those I found, and one of them was distinctly so marked.’<sup>1</sup>

Shy and timid as the hare must undoubtedly be admitted to be in the generality of cases, yet when her young are in danger she will willingly show a determined defence, and fight pluckily in their behalf. A notable instance of this was reported by Mr. John Wilkes :—

‘On September 13,’ writes this observer, ‘as I sat in my rough-built straw hut waiting to shoot wood-pigeons in the fast fading twilight, all at once I was startled by the cry of a leveret among the nettles and long grass not many yards distant. Springing to my feet, I ran with my spaniel to the spot, where I had but just time to see a weasel run from the leveret, and disappear among the long grass and nettles, where my spaniel failed to catch it ; but I had hardly time to pick up the little thing, which had blood flowing from behind its ears, before a full-grown hare came rushing through the copse, and dashed up to within two yards of me and my excited spaniel (which was beating round me after the weasel), and ran round us snorting in defiance, and every time the

<sup>1</sup> *Field*, Sept. 28, 1878.

leveret (which I held in my hand) cried out, the old hare (which was evidently its mother) rushed up to us snorting as if it would attack us, and remained near all the time we hunted for the weasel, which I am sorry to say escaped us that night. The old hare once, in her boldness, to defend her young, ran up within a few inches of the dog's nose.' <sup>1</sup>

Practical men always assure me that the doe hare lives a solitary life, except in the season of love. The charge of the leverets, which are born with open eyes, depends entirely upon the female parent. They say also that it is a mistake to keep as many jack hares as does on a farm, because the superabundant males fight viciously, and one buck will amply suffice to pair with half a dozen does. Some people maintain also that they can distinguish the sexes of hares by the way in which the animals carry their ears. The female allows her ears to fall back (as they do while she rests in her form) when fleeing from her enemies. The male animal carries one of his ears partly raised as he races away. I cannot vouch for the truth of this belief; but it is prevalent among poachers who depend upon hare catching for their subsistence, and are therefore fairly well acquainted with the actions of the animal they persecute. My

<sup>1</sup> *Field*, Sept. 22, 1892.

own impression is that the jack hare consorts to a certain extent with his female partner or partners, and that he takes some interest in the welfare of the leverets which have derived their existence from his erotic propensities.

This view receives a certain amount of independent corroboration from another source. 'On September 2 last,' writes Mr. Thomas Wolferstan, 'my brother and I were shooting in North Cornwall, and were trying a large uncultivated close, of between twenty and thirty acres in size, in search of some birds, which we had just before flushed. I was at a distance of some 200 or 250 yards from my brother, when he picked out a hare, and let it go away, apparently unhurt. The hare made for the only gateway, which was some 100 yards from me, and the whole length of the close from the hare, but in a different direction. I ran towards the gate, and got within fifty yards of the hare when it was nearing the gateway. I shot at it, but without effect, and the hare ran nearly to the gateway, then turning sharp round faced me and came right back, making for the hedge behind me, where, however, I could see no place for it to break. As it passed me I fired my second barrel and killed it. My brother and I were both at a loss to know what had caused the hare to turn and face the gun

instead of getting away through the gateway, which was entirely open in every way. When we passed through the gateway, and had gone but ten or twelve yards, my brother put his foot almost on another hare, and when she went away killed her. He then found that his foot was resting on three leverets not bigger than rats, and it was evident that the first hare, being the jack, had shirked the gateway so as not to run over the doe in her form. We had dogs with us, but they did not chase, although probably the hare might have expected they would. I may add that, so far as we could see, there was no other means of exit from the first close but the gateway, it being surrounded, except in that one place, with an unusually high fence and ditch on either side.’<sup>1</sup>

Apropos of leverets, I may remark that the hare makes a very delightful pet, provided it be captured young and treated with judicious kindness. Everyone knows the story of the poet Cowper’s hares, but they were in no sense singular. Many hares had been domesticated before Cowper tamed his pets, the results varying according to the disposition of the individual animal, and the respective pains bestowed upon its education. Some years ago my friends

<sup>1</sup> *Zoologist*, 1883, p. 75.

Messrs. Mann of Aigle Gill reared a tiny leveret, which had been caught on their farm while still too young to feed itself. It was nursed and tenderly cared for. In the course of time it grew up and became a favoured member of the household, the recipient of many herbs and other delicate and toothsome tit-bits. This creature was very quiet and retiring in its habits during the hours of daylight ; but, with the arrival of the gloaming, it threw aside its reserve, and became as captivating a plaything as a man could desire. My friends tell me that as long as they kept this hare (a period of about two years) they could generally foretell the weather of the following day, from the actions of their favourite. The creature became extremely lively and restless before a change of weather, and was evidently highly susceptible to atmospheric conditions. If she was unusually frolicsome and uneasy, the weather was sure to undergo a marked change. I am not aware that this fact had been recorded previously to the present notification of its existence. In the summertime this doe hare—for it proved to be a doe—was kept in a little hutch placed just outside the house. My friends used to lean out of their windows in the deep stillness of night, to listen to their captive calling softly to the free jack hare which came to visit her, but always

paused on the brow of the hill just above the house. These creatures used to call to one another in low and plaintive tones, but it was always quite easy to hear the wild fellow responding to the plaintive overtures of the prisoner. Eventually, he may have won her affections, for she escaped from confinement, and, taking to the fields, reverted to a wild life. On one occasion she was recognised and nearly recaptured ; but freedom was sweet and she wisely made the most of it. I am assured that the old doe hare usually calls to her leverets, in a way similar to that just described, when she desires to suckle them ; but I cannot at present vouch for the accuracy of this from personal knowledge. Certainly an old hare will always answer the cry of a leveret that squeals in fear or pain ; but that is of course entirely another matter. I once saw a hare that lived in a happy family, so-called, together with a kite, several cats, and some small birds and quadrupeds. Tame hares generally fraternise with the dogs of the house in which they live. Mr. C. Wapshore tells me that Mr. Brooker of Winterbourne reared a tiny leveret, which he found in the month of August 1890. He trained it to sit up at his command, holding a small stick in its mouth, but its favourite performance was to beat a tambourine, an accomplishment shared by another

hare known to me. Indoors, Mr. Brooker's hare fraternised fearlessly with three dogs—a collie, a Skye terrier, and a spaniel—and cultivated in addition a friendship with the family cat. The hare loved to jump over the backs of his playmates, and would play the tambourine sitting on the collie. Eventually, Mr. Brooker found it convenient to part with his accomplished hare. The animal changed hands for the handsome consideration of five guineas.

## CHAPTER II

## PAGES OF HARE LORE

FOR the first few weeks of their existence leverets follow their female parent. Under her careful tutelage they soon learn to crop their favourite clover and to ramble in search of fields of growing carrots. But the love of independence is common to leverets as to most other young creatures. In fact, no sooner do the little fellows find that they can trust to their own powers of wind and limb, than they shake off parental restraint, and roam through the hayfields in search of young loves and fresh adventures. Eventually every individual becomes an anchorite. She makes her form in a snug and quiet corner ; to it she returns repeatedly, until tired of its monotony. Life is easy and pleasant during the summer months. At first she browses upon sweet clover and tender shoots of herbage. As the corn springs up in the fields, the hare repairs to the standing oats ; nor does she hesitate to risk the safety of her neck in following the

runs which she makes through the midst of the ripening crops. After the corn has been carried, the hare frequents the stubbles, or seeks provender in the turnip fields. Prudent farmers, knowing that the hare prefers swedes to any other root crop, used to drill in a few rows of swedes on purpose for the benefit of Puss. The Ground Game Act has latterly superseded such kindly offices. As winter advances the hare feeds more and more upon the turnips, but she does not spoil them like the rabbit, but is content to consume the root which she has selected to afford her repast. If the weather becomes very severe, many of the hares browse upon the tops and sprouts of young whins. Others gather together in kitchen gardens and fill their bellies with cabbages. If hard pressed, they will eat a variety of substances which they would not touch in a season of plenty. In the pride of their summer strength, the fine brown rascals delight to steal into the flower gardens and devour the carnations, to the annoyance of the gardeners. In hard weather the poor beasts are driven to eat such indigestible substances as the berries of the common holly. Mr. R. Mann assures me that when pressed by hunger the hares of his district repair to the spots where the plant called 'Rest Harrow' grows. Scraping away the snow, they devour the leaves of the flower. Else-

where they draw into the neighbourhood of stackyards and nibble at the haystacks. If any turnips have been left uncovered you are pretty sure to find in the morning that the hare has found them out, and taken sly advantage of its opportunity. More serious loss is caused in the wintertime by the hare's propensity for gnawing the bark of young trees.

The loss in nursery gardens, where valuable pines are grown, is often very considerable. One of the best methods of averting probable mischief that have been suggested is to place virgin cork round the stems of the young trees, taking care to secure it with wires in such a way that the attacks of hares and rabbits will be rendered ineffectual. These animals can fast for several days at a time without injury. They are usually in the very finest condition at the beginning of winter, so that they can afford to undergo some waste of adipose tissue without experiencing serious suffering. If a heavy fall of snow happens to sweep across the country, the hare often submits to be buried where it lies, right out in the open field. Only a tiny hole in the snow is kept open by the warm breath of the animal. Its imprisonment may last five or six days without harm to the little quadruped ; but the majority of hares seek shelter in the woods and spinneys during periods of specially protracted frost. They

do not ascend the hillside, as sheep would try to do under similar circumstances ; they either lie in their forms as described, or pick their way about the skirts of the preserves. As long as the snow is soft and treacherous, it is dangerous for the hare to abandon the shelter of her favourite cover in order to forage for food out in the open fields.

I must not omit to notice the fact that when fresh snow has fallen a hare is easily tracked by the imprints of her feet. Countryfolk have always entertained a weakness for this variety of sport. It is a little surprising that it should ever have been thought necessary to declare it illegal in our mild climate. The fact is that the hare can bound with great ease and speed over the surface of frozen snow. It sinks easily, however, into soft snow, and cannot readily make good its escape from a fast dog ; the latter, being more powerful than the hare, finds less difficulty in ploughing its way through the yielding substance. In view of the class distinctions already discussed, it is interesting to notice that Henry VIII. allowed no one, whatever his station in life or estate, to trace, destroy, or kill any hare in the snow with any dog, bitch, bow, or otherwise. ‘And the sessions or leet may enquire thereof ; and after inquisition found, they shall for every hare so killed, cess upon every offender 6s. 8d.,

to be forfeited to the King, if in the sessions ; and to the lord of the leet, if in the leet.' But the popularity of the amusement seems in time to have rendered the statute a dead letter. James I. adopted more stringent measures, ordering that an offender should be committed to the common gaol for six months, unless he paid the churchwardens for the use of the poor 20s. for every hare which he had traced and killed in the snow.

Dr. Shufeldt, the American ornithologist, made some valuable observations upon the leaping powers of hares in New Mexico. 'While rambling,' he says, 'in the wintertime over the snow-covered plains in this region, I have recently interested myself in ascertaining how far, on a level surface, a hare or rabbit may leap at each spring, at a time when either of these animals is put to its best speed. Two species of *Lepus* are quite abundant in this vicinity, viz. the Mexican hare (*L. callotis callotis*), and the sage hare, which is really a medium-sized rabbit (*L. sylvaticus Nuttall*), while the first mentioned is a big hare. It is not uncommon to find here, in certain localities, a stretch of perfectly level prairie, extending for a distance of three or four miles, and when this is covered by an even layer of one inch or more of snow, it offers an admirable surface on which to take account of the

distance which may separate any two tracks of one of these animals, either one made by a hare, or one made by one of the rabbits. On such a prairie as I have just referred to I have, on numerous occasions, fired at these animals when they have been running, and at the same time beyond the range of my fowling-piece ; such a shot almost invariably has the effect of so alarming the game as to make it run at its very best rate of speed, and, upon coming up with the tracks they have left on the snow at such times, I have been surprised at the distances they can clear at each individual leap. Under these conditions I once measured the spaces cleared by an old Mexican hare, and found the first two equalled twelve feet a piece, while the third effort was rather more than thirteen feet, and I have never known this species to exceed this, although I have tested not a few of them. Of course the rabbit cannot compete with such magnificent gymnastics as this : it will, however, when thus frightened, make leaps of fully six feet ; and on one occasion I measured one on the dead-level prairie which was rather more than seven feet. At their common rate of going the hare rarely clears more than four feet at any single leap, while the rabbit is satisfied with rather more than two feet, and when quietly feeding about the sage-brush the tracks made by an

individual of either species may actually overlap each other.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Barrett Hamilton measured the successive leaps of an Irish hare while chased by a dachshund, and found them to consist of the following distances measured in inches :—90, 46, 90, 45, 86, 42, 62, 44, 86, 47, 60, 120. ‘The snow being hard and frozen at the top, the animal did not sink into it, but left two slight but clearly recognisable footmarks on its surface after each leap. The measurements were made from one pair of marks on the snow to the next pair, and not, as in the following measurements, from one mark made by a hind foot to the next made by a hind foot. They are rough, but are probably accurate to within an inch or two. The largest leap, ten feet, will compare very favourably with the measurements given by Dr. Shufeldt of the leaps of the American hare, which he describes as a “big hare,” and therefore likely to make a longer leap than our own. Probably the hare whose leap I measured would have added another foot to her best efforts if she had had a brace of greyhounds at her heels. I found that the length of the leaps taken by a hare, when merely wandering about, was close on thirty inches from the mark made by one hind foot to the next one made by that foot, or

<sup>1</sup> *Zoologist*, 1888; p. 259.

much less if measured from a fore-foot mark to the next hind-foot mark. This was also about the length of the dog's leap. The alternate nature of the leaps is interesting to notice, long and short leaps seeming to follow each other in regular succession.'<sup>1</sup>

The force with which a hare runs depends, I fancy, a good deal upon whether it is out in the centre of a field or is approaching a gateway. Unless pursued, it reduces its pace as it approaches an exit from the field. Mr. Miller Christy cites a curious collision between two hares :—'During a day's shooting on my uncle's land at Boynton Hall, near Chelmsford, about the middle of December, a hare came by its death in a most extraordinary way. Two hares were put up together from a field. Both ran back and tried to pass the beaters, but, being shouted at, became apparently confused, and ran straight at one another without looking. The result was a collision, after which one hare fell over, and its neck was found to be broken. The occurrence was witnessed by my uncle's keeper and several of the beaters, but I believe none of the guns saw it. I have heard of a case in which a coursed hare killed itself by running against a clod of earth, but never before have I heard of such an instance as the foregoing.'<sup>2</sup> A fact which I have

<sup>1</sup> *Zoologist*, 1891, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1883, p. 75.

mentioned once already, but which always strikes me as being curious, is the dislike which hares manifest towards rabbits. Perhaps I should rather say the animosity which rabbits display towards hares ; for, singularly enough, the smaller animals are sufficiently bold to drive the hares before them. This can easily be verified by observation in the early hours of the day, in any place where both species happen to be numerous.

The hare is essentially a fastidious animal. . Like the sheep, it refuses to graze on grass lands which rabbits have defiled. The hare loves to feed on the tender shoots of the young barley when it is only about a foot above the ground, which is of course in the month of March. St. John thought that the human eye had a fascinating power over the hare. ‘As long as you keep your eye fixed on that of the hare, and approach her from the front, she appears afraid to move, and, indeed, will sometimes allow herself to be taken up by the hand. A hare, when dogs are near her, is particularly unwilling to start from her form. In cover shooting many of the old and experienced hares steal off quietly the moment they hear the sound of dogs or beaters at one end of the wood ; and thus their quick senses of hearing and smelling enable them to escape

the guns, however numerous and however well placed.’<sup>1</sup>

St. John mentions how he slept one night at a shepherd’s house in the hills. ‘During almost all the night the dogs of the place were barking and yelping at my deerhound, entirely preventing me from sleeping. I was the first person up, and on going out I started a hare that had made her form up against the turf wall of the cottage, undeterred by the constant noise of dogs that had gone on during all the night.’

The hare is associated with some interesting traditions of folklore, both in the Highlands and elsewhere. Mr. P. M. C. Kermode writes that the Manx equivalent of the proverb ‘Birds of a feather flock together’ is ‘*Furree yn mwaagh rish e heshey*’—i.e. ‘The hare will be found with his mate.’ It is the object of superstition and a favourite form to be assumed by a witch. The son of a witch, who himself dabbled in the black art, was known as ‘*Gaaue mwaagh*,’ ‘The hare-smith.’ He adds that the natives of the Isle of Man never think of eating hares. It would be interesting to hear if there is any other district in which a similar prejudice may happen to survive.

To return to our discussion about the habits

<sup>1</sup> *Natural History and Sport in Moray*, p. 292.

of hares, I would draw attention to a fact which does not seem to be generally recognised, that the hare is an excellent *swimmer*, and is quite at home in either fresh or salt water. Not that it likes to enter either element. As a rule hares avoid wetting their fur.

If they find themselves obliged to cross a stream in shifting their feeding grounds, they generally search out the narrowest ford, even though the water to be crossed should consist only of a small burn or fellside beck. But it is exceptions that enforce the rule. For example, a hare has been seen to swim the river Elbe in a long reach, where the river is at least 180 yards broad. This involved her swimming more than eighty yards through very rough water. 'A hare intending to mislead its pursuers has been seen spontaneously to quit its seat, and to proceed to a pond at the distance of nearly a mile, and having washed itself push off again through a quantity of rushes. It has, too, been known, when pursued to fatigue by dogs, to thrust another hare from its seat and squat itself down in its place. Jacques du Fouillouse has seen hares swim successively through two or three ponds of which the smallest was eighty paces round.'<sup>1</sup> Yarrell has placed on record an experience of the swimming

<sup>1</sup> Loudoun's *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. iv. p. 143.

powers of the hare, which may now be considered classical—‘A harbour of great extent on our northern coast has an island near the middle of considerable size, the nearest point of which is a mile distant from the mainland at high water, and with which point there is frequent communication by a ferry. Early one morning in spring two hares were observed to come down from the hills of the mainland towards the seaside ; one of which from time to time left its companion, and proceeding to the edge of the water, stopped there a minute or two, and then returned to its mate. The tide was rising, and after waiting some time, one of them, exactly at high water, took to the sea and swam rapidly over, in a straight line, to the opposite projecting point of land. The observer on this occasion, who was near the spot, but remained unperceived by the hares, had no doubt they were of different sexes, and that it was the male which swam across the water, as he had probably done many times before. It was remarkable that the hares had remained on the shore nearly half an hour ; one of them occasionally examining, as it would seem, the state of the current, and ultimately taking to the sea at that precise period of the tide called slack water, when the passage across could be effected without being carried by the force of the stream either above

or below the desired point of landing. The other hare then cantered back to the hills.’<sup>1</sup>

Mr. G. H. Kinahan mentions an instance, which came under his own personal knowledge, of an Irish hare voluntarily choosing to rear her three leverets upon an island in a lake in Galway. The islet was only thirty yards in diameter, and distant about 100 yards from the shore. The hare apparently passed the day on the hill and swam the ford at night to revisit her progeny. ‘E. H.,’ a correspondent of *Nature*, furnishes a brief note showing how much at home in the water a hare may be :—‘I was by the little river Arun below the old mill at Pulborough one day, when I saw a hare quietly cantering down the opposite field towards the river. A bank hid the actual crossing from me ; but when the hare emerged from the water into the field in which I was standing, I was amused to see the dog-like fashion in which it stood and shook off the moisture, scattering the spray far and wide before resuming its leisurely canter. The act had the air of being habitual.’<sup>2</sup> Mr. G. Plarr reported to the same periodical how he saw a hare take to the water to elude its pursuers, which it did with perfect success, continuing its hurried flight as soon as it gained the

<sup>1</sup> Loudoun’s *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. v. p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Nature*, vol. xxxix. p. 306.

further river bank, without stopping to shake its dripping coat. The creature while swimming presented a somewhat strange and unwonted appearance, its head seeming to be large out of all proportion to the size of the body. This illusion was due of course to the fact of the head being kept above water, and therefore dry, while the rest of the body was submerged.

In December 1888 a brown hare was seen one day to cross the marsh at Dumbarton in the direction of the river Leven. She arrived upon the embankment at the moment when a man also reached the embankment. Unwilling to retrace her steps across the marsh, the hare boldly took to the water and began to cross. Unluckily when she reached the distant bank, she found her escape cut off by another enemy. Apprehending the danger, she turned and made again for the point she had recently left, and succeeded in accomplishing the swim home, but only to fall into the hands of her first enemy.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. J. Beaumont witnessed an interesting instance of a hare taking to the sea, when pressed by greyhounds. 'In October 1887,' he says, 'I was a member of a shooting party, staying near Auchencairn on the Kirkcudbrightshire coast, where for

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, vol. xxxviii. p. 209.

miles the waves of the Solway beat on red sandstone cliffs, broken here and there by small bays, where the burns run down to the sea through little glens. One day I had left the others, and was standing among the seaweed-covered boulders of such a bay, when the sounds of a course reached me from a hillside a quarter of a mile or more away, and presently I saw the hare and greyhounds coming down to the shore ; they ran close past where I was standing, and then, to my astonishment, the hare deliberately entered the water and swam out to sea. I could not persuade the greyhounds to follow, though one was so close that, if she had done so at once, she could have caught the hare without swimming, as the latter was out of her depth directly, and swam very slowly. The sun was shining very bright on the water, and it soon became very difficult to keep the hare in sight, as her head only showed now and then on the top of a wave, and about a hundred yards from the shore I saw her for the last time, though I stayed about the place a long time. This hare was perhaps hard pressed ; still I could see no reason why she should not have run along the shore to the marsh dyke, which was close to, and where she would probably have made good her escape.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. *Nature*, vol. xxxix, p. 270.

But hares have many perils to face on land as well as sea. It may be doubted whether the majority of sportsmen have obtained a correct conception of the quantity of game that annually perishes upon the railway lines which nowadays cut up many of the finest sporting estates in this country. All sorts of animals succumb by accident to the resources of civilisation. I have known a fine old dog otter to stray upon the metals, with fatal results. Water-rats are great sufferers, nor is this difficult to understand, since they inhabit the ditches upon both sides of the railway track, and often scuttle across the sleepers. In the neighbourhood of towns it is the domestic cat which perishes oftenest on the railway. Out in the open country hares and rabbits may be said to 'ring the changes.' It must not be supposed that feathered game is more fortunate than furred. Pheasants and partridges often strike the engines; red grouse and black game meet with the same fate. Only the other day a railway man brought to me a delicately mottled nightjar, which had incontinently charged the engine of a passenger train, and that in broad daylight. But hares and rabbits are most to the tastes of railway officials. The drivers and firemen of goods trains have generally the best chance of annexing the game which perishes on the

railway. Platelayers get their share of such chance booty, and know well upon what parts of the line a search along the metals in the early morning will prove most profitable. Mr. A. T. Story reports the experience of a driver who used to run over one of the western lines threading a well-preserved country. 'Game was in abundance, and frequently coveys of birds were seen upon the line. One day, however, while going slowly up a steep incline with a goods train, he astonished his mate by stepping down from his engine, getting over the fence into a field, and immediately afterwards returning with two live hares. As they were going up the incline he saw two hares fighting. When they do this they sit on their hind-quarters and go at it like two boxers. This they generally do in such a blind rage that they may be approached unnoticed. Our driver knew this, and so quietly went up to them and took first one and then the other by the scruff of the neck, as he put it, and then walked off with them to his engine.'<sup>1</sup>

The power of scent is well developed in hares, and doubtless assists the old doe in finding her young. Poachers often rub their hands with fresh

<sup>1</sup> *Strand Magazine*, viii. p. 286.

hay for fear of communicating any odour to the snares which they set.

More than forty years ago a Russian zoologist, Middendorf, drew the attention of naturalists to the fact of the brown hare of the low ground interbreeding with the blue mountain hare, and producing fertile offspring. I do not know why this should not often take place. The blue hares keep to the tops of our moors all through the summer, it is true. In snowy weather they often descend to the low grounds, and it sometimes happens that a stray individual chooses to pass the following summer on the land to which she migrated in late autumn.

An intelligent keeper in the service of Macleod of Macleod assures me that hares which he believes to be hybrids have been killed repeatedly on the shooting in his charge, and reports of others have reached me from different quarters. The blue hare is now common, even in the lowlands of Scotland. Of course the chance of her hybridising with her brown or red neighbour becomes more considerable as her breeding range extends.

Professor Fatio states that the brown hares which live among the Alps often come into contact with the blue hares of higher altitudes, and apparently the two species interbreed. The hybrids resemble both their

parents in the character of their pelage, but are inferior in size to pure-bred animals. The ears and the tails of such hybrids are constantly rather shorter than those of the common hare. Fatio has himself examined such animals ; they were procured in the Bernese Oberland and the Valais. Professor Theobald repeatedly received hybrid hares from the Oberhalbstein, and even kept one of them alive for a considerable period.

This subject has not received its proper share of attention from Scottish naturalists ; but further research may prove, perhaps, that these blue and brown hares do, in some rare and exceptional instances, interbreed. Mr. Lumsden exhibited a supposed hybrid hare before the Glasgow Natural History Society. It had been shot in December 1876, near Dumbarton Moor, upon which blue hares had been turned out a few years previously. Mr. J. Cordeaux shot a similar animal in Perthshire in September of the same year. ‘ This example, which he compared the same day with pure specimens of both species, exhibited very distinctly a mixture of the colours of both parents, that of the common hare predominating. It differed also, in some respects, from the mountain hare, being generally larger, with larger head, larger ears, and broader forehead. The head keeper on this moor, an experienced

man, stated that there was no doubt whatever about the interbreeding of the two species, but that the progeny was infertile.’<sup>1</sup> I may, perhaps, take this opportunity to express the hope that, if a reader of these lines should happen to have the good luck to come across an apparently hybrid hare, he will send it to the Natural History Museum, so that its credentials may be fully investigated by a professed expert. The opinions of amateurs are seldom, if ever, considered final in such difficult matters. But though sportsmen have not cared much to inquire whether hares interbreed, they are always interested in shooting a white or piebald hare.

A true albino combines the characters of pink irides and pure white fur. Such a hare is seldom met with. The late Mr. J. Gatcombe saw a specimen in the Plymouth market in the year 1885. It was a leveret, not a full-grown animal, and had been captured in North Devon. White hares have often been met with upon the Continent, but the colours of their irides are seldom reported. Certainly the term albino should be applied to such animals as exhibit pink irides exclusively. Mr. A. D. Bartlett urges that the term ‘semi-albino’ should attach to a white hare, or other animal, which has irides of the natural colour. Edward

<sup>1</sup> *Zoologist*, 1877, p. 101.

Blyth long ago suggested that *leucotism* was the best term that could be employed to designate a phase of abnormal whiteness unassociated with red irides, and it may well be doubted if his term can be improved.

Some fifty years ago a beautiful white hare frequented Lowther Park in Westmoreland. It was, rationally enough, preserved for a time, but came to an untimely end nevertheless, being accidentally killed by a scythe. Three years afterwards a pure white leveret appeared in the same locality. Similar animals have been killed at one time or another in most parts of England. A pure white hare was killed in Lincolnshire in September 1894. No fewer than three white hares were killed in Nottinghamshire in 1888. 'In October last,' says Mr. J. Whitaker, 'the Earl of Burford shot at Bestwood Park, near here, a full-grown white hare with eyes of a pale blue, so often seen in white varieties. A white leveret also was caught, soon after it had left the nest, in the previous April. Possibly they were both of the same litter. In December last a white hare was shot at Rufford, and it is very curious that these should have occurred in one year, especially as there are now so few hares left—not one to twenty of former days. No white hare has occurred about here for forty years to my knowledge, though hares used to swarm all over these

parts.'<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that white and pied hares seem to be caught or killed almost invariably before attaining their mature growth, so that the possibilities of their transmitting their peculiar characters to descendants is frustrated. It would not be safe, however, to conclude that white leverets of necessity retain their unnatural garb after reaching maturity. Changes in the colour of the pelage are naturally effected by a shedding of fur in the brown hare. Some years ago an old shepherd employed upon a Southdown farm found five white leverets a day or so old. He marked their ears with a pair of nippers, as if they had been sheep instead of hares. Some months later, a fine grey hare was shot in the same locality, which on examination proved to be one of the five ear-marked leverets, which had turned grey on reaching maturity.<sup>2</sup> A curious pied leveret was shot in Cumberland in 1884 by Mr. J. Parker. Its body was of the usual colour, but the forehead, muzzle, sides of the head and forefeet were all pure white. Another hare, presented to the Carlisle Museum with the last named, by Mr. Parker, has a curious appearance, being neither white nor brown, but a compromise between them.

<sup>1</sup> *Zoologist*, 1889, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Field*, Oct. 5, 1878.

The hoary appearance of this hare is due to numerous white hairs which extend along the entire length of the animal, from the shoulders to the flanks. The markings of pied quadrupeds are often symmetrically arranged, but Mr. Whitaker records a hare 'which had the whole of one side from nose to rump pure white, and on the other side a patch of white as big as one's hand behind the shoulder.' This animal was killed in a wood in Nottinghamshire in the month of January.

A pretty variety of the hare was killed upon the borders of Hants and Dorset in the autumn of 1889. Mr. Corbin states that it was a male, and not full-grown. 'The ordinary brown colour was replaced by silvery grey, darker on the back and paler beneath, interspersed with darker but white-tipped hairs, giving it a singularly grizzled appearance.' The rarest variety of colour in the hare is the pure black form. A list of the black hares that have been killed in Great Britain would be a very short one. One of the number was caught as a tiny leveret in Epping Forest, some thirty years ago, *i.e.* in June 1865; this was kept alive as a pet. Another black hare used to perambulate the North of England at one time, as a distinguished performer in a so-called 'Happy Family.'

## CHAPTER III

## THE HARE AND THE LAWYERS

AFTER the middle of August the daylight in the North of Scotland is sadly curtailed. The day seems only half spent when a certain stillness falls upon the landscape. In the near foreground a sudden glow of crimson light fires the hayfields into a ruddy blaze. The distant hills exchange the varied colours of the afternoon for a soft and delicate tone of iron grey. As I pen my thoughts in a beautiful Perthshire glen (unwilling to turn my face homeward, in spite of the persistent attacks of swarms of black and angry midges) the hollows and fissures which line yon mural precipices become indistinct at first, then cease to be visible. The rugged outline of the heights which hem in the horizon alone remains unaltered. The black wood which crowns the rounded hill to the right is a famous deer forest. The pine-trees which grow upon the slopes of the hill stand out stiffly against a column of violet cloud ; they look for all

the world like an army of Highland warriors, ranged as it were shoulder to shoulder. A little further to the north their fellows start up irregularly against the skyline. Their desolation witnesses to the terrible force of the tornado which devastated that and many another goodly forest during the darkness of a winter night. The natural terraces which run parallel to one another on the nearer braes are red with heather, still retaining the pride of maturity.

Swiftly as the rays of light are departing, I can just detect the touch of autumn in the dulled tone of the leaves that still cluster closely to the twigs of the roadway lime-tree. Suddenly my reverie is interrupted by the sharp crack of a farmer's gun. Instantly it travels across the water below, assuring me of the untimely sorrow which has overtaken the blue 'cushie doo' at its own roost, its favourite trysting place. It is now that my favourite, the brown hare, awakes and rises from the form in which she has found repose since early morning. She sleeps, it is true, with open eyes ; but her dark irides are now lighted with intelligence. Brushing aside the handful of faded leaves which had fallen upon her soft coat, Puss proceeds to stretch her shapely limbs with all the easy grace peculiar to a wild animal. Refreshed and invigorated by her period of inaction, she proceeds to make a

cautious reconnoitre at the edge of the plantation in which she has found a safe asylum. For a moment she halts as if undecided what course to adopt. To spring across the mossy bank which lies between the cover and the hayfield would only be the work of a few seconds ; but she dreads the enactment of a tragedy. Her timidity is short-lived. Hunger sharpens the appetite. Gathering boldness, she emerges from her retreat in one quick, nervous leap. Nor is she bound upon an uncertain course. Forthwith she steers her way to a cherished nook, where, once arrived, she may crop sweet grass and luscious clover to her heart's content, surrounded by her natural mates. Meantime she is content to steal noiselessly across the broad acres that divide her pastures from her still warm bed, watching furtively every gap and corner, anxious to reach the haven for which she has set out unnoticed by any of her enemies. Fomarts are now rare in most parts of the country. They feed upon frogs and small birds. Rabbits are acceptable to them, but I doubt if they kill many hares. Weasels and stoats are mischievous to young leverets, but a fox will stalk a hare of any size, though he is not particular how he fares, and will readily feed on a dead rat.

In this country the larger birds of prey have become

rare. I doubt whether they ever killed many brown hares, even when they were numerous. The worst enemies of the hare are sheepdogs and half-wild cats. There is no more destructive animal to game than your house cat which has abandoned civilised habits and become a proscribed outlaw. You will not see her during the day, unless by accident. She is cunning enough to lie up in a big rabbit earth all day long. It is in the small hours of the night that she plays havoc with young leverets and other game. Sheepdogs are often self-willed and love to run down half-grown leverets. But two-footed poachers are the most dangerous enemies that the hare has to face. The desire to kill something exists in the mind of the civilised man no less than in that of the savage.

The first Napoleon inherited in its crudest form the craving to destroy life. Although he was an indifferent shot, he used to shoot out of his window at the tame storks and swans which the Empress kept as pets, solely because he wanted to *kill* something.

Another substantial incitement to persecution may be found in the fact that game of any kind always commands a certain monetary consideration. 'They have a proverb among them in Suffolk,' says Willughby : 'A Curlew, be she white or black, she carries twelve pence on her back.'

Lord William Howard, the bold Baron of the Marches, was supplied with great quantities of game for his household at Naworth Castle ; the price which his steward paid was sixpence for an old hare and threepence for a leveret. At the present time a Scottish poacher can generally obtain half a crown for a good hare, and I am told that the price never falls below eighteenpence, even when hares are unsaleable in the shops.

The Rev S. Dixon gives an amusing anecdote apropos of this, in a little work published more than forty years ago. A Welshman is introduced to a Norfolk birdcatcher, who proceeds to describe his experience of the rural police of the day. ‘“ One da’, when I was here all alone arter some draw-waters [goldfinches], up come the rural, lookin’ very knowin’. ‘I sa’, bor,’ ses he, ‘I want a hare very bad ; can’t yow happen o’ one?’ ‘I don’ know,’ ses I, ‘I’ll see what I can du. Per’aps yow’ll be here agin to-morrer.’ So away he walk, as if the lane was his property, instid o’ the governor’s. The governor was ’tome, so I went and told ’im the good-lookin’ rural with the bootiful whiskers wanted a hare. Law, Sar ! how he did cuss and swear ! He called them a set of — jinnizerries. ‘Coyham, bor,’ ses he, ‘I’ll tell ye what to du. Here’s half a crown ; du yow go to the citty,

and buy a nice hare, and git a bill for it, and ha' the bill reseated ; be sure, bor, yow take care o' that.' Next da', up come the police, kind o' smilin'. 'I'a got a hare for ye,' ses I. 'How much is it, bor?' ses he. 'Two shillin's,' ses I. 'Tha's *tu* much,' ses he. 'Don't sin golderin about no sech nonsense,' ses I ; 'there's the hare, and I 'on't take no less. If you don't like it, you may lump it.' So off he go over that there midder, with the hare in his pocket. In a da' or two, he come agin, with his hat cocked o' one side, and sa', 'Yow must go along o' me to the magistrate's, Setten, about that there hare. Yow'll hear further about that.' 'Very well,' ses I, 'I ha'n't no objections. Other folks can see jest as far into a millstone as yow, with all your know.' So when the gen'lmen were a goin' to hear my case, I pulled out the bill riddy reseated, and pruvved that I'd sold the hare agin at a loss, all to oblige the nice-lookin' police.'"<sup>1</sup>

In mediæval days the hare claimed the protection of the law no less than the red deer or the wild boar. In England, as also upon the Continent, the chase of the hare was held in high esteem. A special breed of fleet greyhounds, termed *leporarii*, was maintained both in England and in France. King John, for

<sup>1</sup> *The Dovecote and Aviary*, p. 448.

example, kept a kennel of these dogs in the county of Cumberland. One Allan Wastehouse took charge of it. He kept ten hounds, and four men formed the staff of his kennels. The cost of keeping it up for eighteen months amounted to 109*l.* 15*s.*, a considerable sum in those days. But while the rich and powerful claimed the right of chasing poor Puss in sport, poorer men sought to enjoy her in the pot.

For centuries the fortunes of the hare oscillated between her persecutors, and the legal strategy which devised protection for this animal is curious to study. Richard II. passed a statute prohibiting any layman from keeping greyhounds, or catching hares in nets or snares, unless he could prove that he possessed lands or tenements of the annual value of 40*s.* I do not know whether sporting parsons were then in the ascendent. Possibly they may have been. At all events, any weakness on their part for the pleasures of the chase was anticipated by the draughtsman of this same statute, who debarred the clergy from hunting hares unless their emoluments of office amounted to no less a sum than ten pounds per annum. Thereafter, the lawyers modelled their statutes to suit the views of country gentlemen.

Their patrons, as justices of the peace, brought offenders to book. If necessary, they sent some luck-

less wight to lodge in the king's prison for twelve weary months. James I. was a sport-loving sovereign. The lawyers of his reign framed (for his satisfaction, I suppose) no fewer than three Acts to repress poaching. Of these, the first enacted that from August 1, 1604, no one might keep a greyhound for coursing hares, unless he was either a man of good family, or enjoyed an income, in his own or his wife's right, of 10*l.* a year. Happily for Puss, the man who disregarded this statute might be mulcted in a fine of 40*s.* of good and lawful money of England. A flavour of popularity was infused into this arrangement by the proviso that the persons who were to benefit by the enforcement of the law were the poor and needy persons of the parish, upon whom the fine was to be duly expended by the churchwardens. Charles II. sanctioned a much more stringent Act, by which the property qualification was raised to 100*l.*, due half-yearly from landed property, or at least a lease of 150*l.* for ninety-nine years. Only gentlemen of such visible substance, their heirs and keepers, were thenceforward to have or to keep guns, bows, greyhounds, harepipes, or other sporting implements. There exists a certain statute of William III. which is worth mentioning for the paternal spirit which it breathes, and the adroitness with which the draughtsmen pro-

vided grounds for subsequent litigation. It informs us that, whereas great mischiefs did ensue by inferior tradesmen, apprentices, and other dissolute persons neglecting their trades and employments, in order to follow hunting, fishing, and other game, to the ruin of themselves and damage of their neighbours, it was enacted that, if any such person as aforesaid should presume to hunt, hawk, fish, or fowl on his own account, he should be sued for trespass and mulcted in damages. There is a smack of robust commonsense about this statute, in spite of its somewhat pompous phraseology. As to what should constitute 'a *dissolute* person' the lawyers disagreed; even the judges were divided as to whether a sporting village surgeon and apothecary was or was not a dissolute person within the meaning of the Act.

There is a certain fatherliness about the statutes of the Hanoverian period which is amusing to contemplate. The legislators of that era were practical men, and believed firmly in the medicinal virtues of the lash. They kept their private opinions in the background, and dealt mildly with first offenders. In the reign of George III., first and second offences of night poaching (alas, poor Puss!) were followed by fines not exceeding 20*l.* and 30*l.* A third conviction was a very serious matter. The transgressor was

required to pay a fine of 50*l*. If he failed to meet this heavy liability, the culprit went to gaol for a course of penitentiary discipline, not exceeding a year. He was a lucky man if he obtained his discharge without the addition of a public whipping outside the gaol. This correction was bestowed on the culprit between the hours of twelve and one in the afternoon, so that all the gossips and lazy apprentices might gaze open-mouthed at the strokes of the scourge in their dinner hour. This primitive discipline was also provided for by an Act of William III., which struck at the use of nets and harepipes, and other unhandsome devices for killing hares. The offender was haled before a justice of the peace, who demanded a good account of how he became possessed of dogs or illegal engines. If he could pay his fine, he went home a free man. Otherwise, the authorities were willing to distrain upon his personal property. But there was a proper proviso for the scamp who possessed no worldly chattels. His rascally inroads upon the hares were rewarded by the chastening influence of the house of correction. To improve the occasion the more effectually, he was to be soundly whipped, and kept to hard labour.

Such remedial methods have become distasteful to our modern refinement. All the same there are

plenty of idle rascals in the world for whom the judicious application of a well-furnished birch is fine physic, and much more likely to lead to their moral reformation than a lifetime of imprisonment. Many of us have a certain sneaking sympathy for the poacher. This fades away into thin air as soon as we recognise that in the majority of cases the professed poacher is an idle and dissolute blackguard, who expects other people to maintain his wife and family, while he drinks the fruits of his illegal practices in company with bad characters. Of course I have known some poachers who were temperate men, and only offended against the laws of their country from a passionate love of sport which they could not indulge in any other way ; more's the pity. Such men occasionally make tolerable gamekeepers, though they require much supervision and encouragement. But the majority of poachers are ne'er-do-weels, who prefer the excitement of netting hares to working steadily at a trade. Their nefarious practices lead to sad results, especially in netting hares at night, which was prohibited in Queen Anne's reign. The whipping provided for night poachers by a statute of George III. did not save the hares from the nets of their persecutors. The *mêlées* which ensued between the keepers who tried to seize the long nets, and the

poachers who sought to retain their property, often led to lamentable results. Accordingly, George IV. sanctioned an Act intended to repress such outrages, by dealing more severely with professional criminals. The poacher was to be sent to gaol for three months or six for his first and second offences ; this could not be considered excessively severe. But the third conviction sealed the career of many a young farm hind who had drifted into evil companionship. The State found him a free passage to the Antipodes, and lodged him beyond the seas for seven years. If he was fortunate enough to survive the horrors of the convict ship, he eventually returned to the old home a wiser though sadder man. It is mournful to think how many fine lads must have owed their downfall to their boyish infatuation for netting our dainty Puss.

About the same time that our great-grandfathers began to deport poachers to the colonies, an Act was passed to secure the safety of hares in warrens. If a man presumed to kill a hare within the limits of a warren during the hours of daylight, he rendered himself liable to a fine of five pounds. If he happened, however, to commit the same offence after nine at night, he committed a misdemeanour, and was punished with suitable severity. Rabbits were protected by the Act just alluded to as well as hares ;

curiously enough, the rabbits of the coast of Lincolnshire were specially excluded from the benefits of this Act. The Ground Game Act of 1880 rendered it legal for every occupier of land to kill hares all through the year, and at the present time he still enjoys this right, much to the regret of most sportsmen. The Hares' Protection Act of 1892 modifies the force of previous legislation. It is now illegal to expose for sale any English hare or leveret during the months of March, April, May, June, and July. But dealers are allowed to sell hares imported from the Continent, so that the door is still left open to illicit trafficking in English hares.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE HARE AND HER TROD

THE art of snaring or trapping wild animals has long been invested with a certain flavour of mystery. This may be accounted for in two ways. In the first place, it is chiefly practised among uncivilised men. In the second place, the secrets of the craft are jealously guarded, and handed down from one generation to another. Whenever we find the snaring of wild animals practised by modern Europeans, we feel instinctively that we stand face to face with the devices which enabled our prehistoric ancestors to perpetuate the existence of the race. Here in England we have to thank poachers and other natural men for preserving intact the methods of the distant past. The number of poachers who at present exercise their wits in defying our statutes is very considerable indeed. I have no means of estimating the quantity of game that annually passes through the hands of professional poachers, but it must be worth many

thousands of pounds. This revenue is expended in supporting the public-houses of our towns and villages ; the publicans have no better patrons than acknowledged poachers. An interesting article about poaching recently appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*.<sup>1</sup> I was much pleased with its perusal, especially when I came across the naïve remark that ‘from varying causes poaching has become almost a lost art.’ Such a consummation is to be devoutly wished ; but I am sadly afraid that it will hardly arrive before the millennium. I handle, so to speak, hundreds of poachers, and have often tried to persuade them to abandon their wicked ways ; but I confess that I have met with very few reformed poachers. The instinct to kill game is itself a survival from the habits of our remote forefathers, among whom the cleverest trappers of the community were those who exercised most influence with their fellows. Rich and poor share this instinct alike. The well-to-do man pays for his ‘shoot.’ The labourer cannot afford to pay for it ; so he makes it pay him instead. Of course poaching is just as dishonest as any other kind of theft ; but you cannot induce ignorant men to see the heinousness of it. The result of poaching is bad every way. It unsettles a man, makes him deceitful, encourages him

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, 1893, p. 470.

to think lightly of family duties, takes him into bad company, and frequently leaves him a dipsomaniac. But so long as game-dealers are allowed to buy poached hares and other game without inquiry as to how the game was obtained, so long the crime of poaching is sure to flourish. Our legislation is more to blame than the much-abused poacher. If we made poaching unprofitable, it would be given up by the majority of rascals who at present exist by stealing game. Whether the suppression of poaching would be an unmixed advantage is open to doubt. I am afraid that, if the poacher ceased from troubling the hares, he would be forced to earn his living by other dubious practices. A working-man can rarely obtain employment if his character is bad. But this is somewhat of a digression from the subject.

The most primitive form of killing a hare, or any other small quadruped, is to fell it with a stone, a clod of earth, or such other missile as may happen to be within reach. The savage finds by experience that it is best to use a weapon upon which he is sure he can rely. It may be very crude in form, rudely fashioned withal ; but if he knows its exact weight, and how to throw it, depend upon it he will give a good account of its use. I have not come across any present-day poachers who habitually use a throw-stick, though

many members of the fraternity secure occasional rabbits by this method. Fifty years ago the use of the throw-stick was often practised by Scottish poachers, and probably by Englishmen as well. Old Perth residents may perhaps recall a native of their city, who was nicknamed 'Toodle Doodle' by his boon companions. Toodle Doodle has long since gone the way of all flesh. While he lived his fame was great on the countryside. He was a little deformed man, who used to wander about the district in search of hares ; as a matter of fact, he depended upon killing these poor animals for his entire livelihood. Of course he carried snares, and understood right well how to manipulate them to the best advantage, no man more so ; but his favourite weapon was a short throw-stick. He was always accompanied by a small black terrier, which was accredited with knowing as much about hares as his owner. The dog was trained to drive the hare, when found, to his master, who generally waited for the 'drive' on the edge of a brae. When he judged that the animal had arrived within range, the poacher hurled his throw-stick, aiming it in such a manner that it revolved in the air, and hit the poor hare upon the lower part of the body, generally upon the forelegs. The crippled animal was soon pinned by the terrier,

and duly consigned to the pocket of the itinerant poacher.

About the time that Toodle Doodle perambulated the neighbourhood of Perth in quest of hares, there dwelt in Strageath two ploughmen, who killed a great many hares in a similar way. Their weapon was likewise the throw-stick ; but they used it rather differently from Toodle Doodle. They trained the farmyard collie to drive hares. Their mode of proceeding was to wait inside the gate of a field—one standing on each side of the posts—and send the dog round the field to hunt for hares. If he found one he was sure to drive it up to the gate, where the poachers were waiting for their quarry, armed with their short sticks. They threw their sticks in turn at the forelegs of the hare ; if one of them missed her, his mate was tolerably sure to succeed in bringing her down. The distance which they preferred to throw measured about thirty yards. The more expert of these two blackguards was *carry-handed*, i.e. left-handed. The dexterity which he displayed would have done credit to an Australian black. But, of course, his skill would have been of comparatively small service, had he not enlisted the intelligence of the dog in his illicit pursuit.

Apropos of dogs, Mr. L'Aigle Cole lays it down emphatically that 'a foremost necessity for poaching'

is, what he calls, the far-famed poacher's dog, the true Norfolk lurcher, originally a cross between the greyhound for speed and the retriever for scent and work, but now a recognised breed, and often again crossed with the greyhound. I have no doubt that this may be quite correct as regards Norfolk. It would not apply to the Northern poacher's dog.

One of the most accomplished poachers that I have interviewed so far is a native of Penicuik ; he is also one of the sagacious gentlemen who used to return Mr. Gladstone to represent Midlothian. I am bound to say that his adherence to a Radical creed has not hindered this Midlothian poacher from killing hares in Lord Rosebery's preserves ; at least he told me that he had enjoyed prime sport at his Lordship's expense, and was quite ready to pay his hares another visit. I consulted him as to the best dog for a poacher, and his reply was that Mr. L'Aigle Cole was not quite up to date. Lurchers had had their day and had lost their popularity : 'The preference dog for a poacher is a Bedlington ; he is good for a furze bush or anything else.' He then proceeded to tell me, in his rambling fashion, about the serious annoyances that poachers have to put up with. Not the least danger of night poaching is the yelping of the poacher's dog, if he has one ; yet it is difficult to

depend upon any animal always remaining mute. Even a well-trained lurcher will occasionally forget itself and give tongue, especially if it fears that a hare is about to escape. It is here, in particular, that the superiority of the Bedlington breed lies. Even a Bedlington terrier is liable to make a mistake. I am sorry to find that the Midlothian poachers indulge in the most reprehensible practice of making their dogs mute by mechanical means. An instrument called a shoemaker's 'punch' is used to perforate the tongue of the dog, which it does with a single click. The poor animal is supposed to become mute in consequence of this inhuman treatment.

Dogs are now more often dispensed with by poachers than formerly. Here I may remark that the human voice is sometimes used to decoy the hare within range. The poacher arms himself with a gun, and takes his stand in a thick hedge, well concealed. He then reproduces the piteous cries of a leveret in distress. If the imitation be accurate, it often induces an old hare to approach the poacher within shot ; for the hare is sympathetic towards its own kind. This method of poaching is rarely practised nowadays ; but the skill with which an old hand imitates the cries of the suffering leveret is perfectly astonishing.

Ever since the days of Xenophon, nets have

constantly been employed for the capture of the brown hare, nor can I see, as yet, any signs of their falling into disuse. An old poacher laughed merrily when I told him that Mr. L'Aigle Cole says that a partridge net is now difficult to procure. 'He would have been glad to send his own to the gentleman, only he happened to have lent it to another party.' The police, it is true, destroy all the nets they seize ; but the gangs of poachers that infest our larger towns are never at a loss to find illegal engines. The nets used by poachers are generally made of fine strong hempen thread. The favourite mesh measures about two inches and a half. The net is made about four feet deep, so as to allow plenty of ' sheeting ' at the bottom. There is no fixed rule as to the length of the long nets. Most of our North-country poachers prefer to have 120 yards of netting to manipulate. Their business, of course, is to drive as many hares or rabbits as possible into the nets. They choose large fields, if possible, as the scenes of their depredations. The members of the gang sally forth after dark, carrying their nets wrapped around their bodies or concealed in some other way. When all appears to be quiet, when the scout of the party reports that there are no keepers about, and that the coast is clear, the poachers hasten to the edge of a wood or some other suitable

situation, and proceed to set their nets upon stakes driven into the earth at distances of about ten yards apart. When the net has been fixed, either a dog is sent to drive the hares and rabbits into the meshes, or two of the poachers take a long line or cord and proceed to drag the field. All the hares fly before them ; in a few moments the terrified animals find themselves struggling in the toils of the net. They are instantly seized, and at once receive the *coup de grâce*. With regard to this, the poacher requires to consider his customers ; they may object to hares which have lost any blood. Poachers accordingly find that the best way of killing their hapless captives is to break their necks with a single quick jerk.

Very large hauls are sometimes made by poachers ; for the fraternity chiefly visit well-stocked estates, and select their hunting grounds with plenty of low cunning. At the same time it must be admitted that they have many fruitless or nearly fruitless expeditions. Success depends upon various details of which the tiro knows nothing. For example, if a strong wind happens to be blowing directly upon a certain field, the odds are that the hares will stay at home ; if the poachers try to drive that field, they will return home empty-handed. Their success in any case

depends largely upon the rapidity of their movements and upon good generalship.

Poachers never do their work in easy confidence. The possibility of a surprise is always present to their minds. Even if the drive is a complete success, the return home bristles with dangers. The dodges by which they seek to circumvent their enemies are multifold. In some instances professional poachers hire themselves out as farm hinds, and this applies especially to districts in which the labourers live in bothies attached to the farmhouses. In an instance which came under my notice recently, two Glasgow poachers hired themselves out as ploughmen on a lowland farm. The farmer thought that he was fortunate in his servants, for they worked industriously all the day. He little imagined that they spent the small hours in ranging the fields with long nets in search of ground game. As a matter of fact, they killed great quantities of hares, which were duly smuggled to the nearest gamedealers' shops, both in baskets and in brown paper parcels. Nor did they desist until the keepers began to suspect where the blame lay for the disappearance of their hares. When the poachers at length found themselves in danger they quietly decamped, feeling no doubt well pleased with their rural earnings.

As a general rule, a scout precedes his mates if the poachers happen to be returning home, and this man never carries anything that could endanger his liberty. Should he happen to confront a keeper or a policeman, the scout strikes a match, whistles, or gives some other pre-arranged signal to his mates, who retire and keep out of harm's way. The town poachers endeavour to enter the streets as soon as the night policeman has left his beat.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that organised net poaching is mainly responsible for the destruction of hares. The mischief caused by poachers who work alone is quite as serious, and probably more so. For example, a single poacher can, in a very few minutes, fix up half a dozen pocket nets outside the conduits which run through a dyke. He has only to send his dog round the field, or to walk round the enclosure himself, to drive the hares through the conduits. The alarmed animals hasten to escape through their usual means of exit from the field, and of course drop into the purse nets that are suspended outside the 'condies.' A neophyte would fumble too long at setting the nets to be successful in the *coup* ; but not so an old hand. The Midlothian poacher told me that he could fix up his condie nets, drive a field, bag his hares and walk off with his spoil

in the course of less than half an hour, and he regards speed in operating as one of the most important considerations. If the animal once drops into the bag net, its own weight draws the strings and closes the snare. Its screams at once attract the presence of the poacher, who hastens to slay and pouch his victim. Another engine in common use is the gate net. The poacher stretches this net across a gateway, securing it in position by placing a few stones or bricks upon the gateposts. About a foot of netting is generally allowed to trail upon the ground, so that when the driven hare strikes the net, she may speedily roll herself up in the treacherous meshes.

Of course any well-informed keeper has learnt by actual observation all that I have been told by the poachers ; but I give all the details I can for the obvious reason that the more intimately sportsmen understand the ill doings of those who prey upon their game, the more easily will they be able to grapple with the evil. Some people maintain that it is a mistake to publish particulars of poaching, because they argue that it may corrupt the minds of certain readers. I am afraid that if a man wishes to poach, he will find ways and means of learning the secrets of the craft without referring to books. On the other hand, the diffusion of information as to the

practices of poachers can only lead to a more careful supervision of their malpractices.

Game-dealers are at present the chief subsidisers of poachers. They are obliged to buy in the cheapest markets to make a living at all, and cannot afford to be over-curious as to how their supplies are procured. The best method of suppressing poaching that could be adopted would be to insist upon dealers buying game from recognised purveyors, instead of from the middlemen, who are in touch with the most desperate poachers. Farmers sometimes unwittingly assist the aims of poachers by inviting them to snare rabbits on their farms, in order to save their own pockets the outlay of paying a professed trapper. If a poacher has obtained permission to snare rabbits on a certain farm, it becomes easy for him to set snares upon an adjoining property.

If you once admit the morality of snaring, you may say good-bye to the preservation of hares. I know that keepers are often employed in snaring ground game for the market, especially where rabbits are numerous. The convenience of such an arrangement is obvious ; but it nevertheless leads to serious mischief, and makes the *snaring* of game appear a respectable proceeding. Farmers do mischief, both by snaring hares themselves and by keeping farm

servants who use their leisure to kill these animals. Another malpractice is to set an iron trap for a hare in its run, digging out a turf, and covering the trap over with grass. The good will of farmers should be enlisted in preserving hares wherever possible. Generous treatment is pretty sure to meet with its own reward. Certainly it costs something ; but it must not be forgotten that the farmer has more power of protecting ground game than the keeper ; it is worth while, even from a selfish standpoint, to secure his sympathies for the proper preservation of game. As a rule he is apathetic enough about the conduct of his servants ; provided that the farm hands work well in fair and foul weather alike, he considers that it is no particular business of his to pry curiously into the way in which they spend their leisure time. A certain Scottish village boasts among its inhabitants a stalwart ploughman, whom nature has afflicted with an unquenchable thirst. His efforts to allay this distressing complaint have earned for him the sobriquet of the 'Whale.' Once upon a time, it happened that the 'Whale' cast an envious eye upon the goodly hares that daily fattened upon the standing corn of his master. The tracks which the animals made through the green crops suggested to his evil imagination the possibilities of snares. He proceeded

to procure the requisite material. After finishing a day's honest toil, the 'Whale' casually strolled home by way of a likely spot for his pastime. He proceeded to set his snares and left for his cottage. Unluckily, his calculations were upset by a smart keeper, who happened to be abroad early next day and saw the snares. He did not remove them, but hid up in the corn for the arrival of the marauder. When the 'Whale' lifted his snares, the keeper jumped up and wished him a fine morning. As soon as the matter was reported to the tenant farmer, he dispensed with the services of the 'Whale.' Had the farmer, however, been previously interested in the preservation of hares, I doubt whether the labourer would have cared to risk his situation by the misconduct described.

Unless farmers happen to be sportsmen, they generally adopt a *laissez-faire* position on the subject of the game laws, and readily overlook the moral obliquity of a useful hand whose unfortunate penchant for fur is perhaps his only weakness. What I have said, of course, applies more particularly to England and the lowland portions of Scotland. I do not think that Highlanders lend themselves very kindly to the tricks of the Saxon poacher, though I am bound to admit that here and there some dishonest shepherds and crofters levy toll upon the game in their district. But

whatever the nationality of the poacher, he requires to possess a competent knowledge of the habits of his quarry, if he hopes to prosecute his misdeeds with success. The hare in particular exacts a careful study, since its habits are whimsical and vary with the locality. The hare is keenly alive to the state of the weather. For example, if the night promises to be coarse, and the wind is blowing hard, the hare does not venture out into the centre of the field as boldly as is her wont. She prefers to keep out of reach of the wind, and, therefore, browses along the edge of her favourite cover.

The *necklace*, or snare, which proves fatal every year to thousands of brown hares, is a very simple affair, and can be made in a very few minutes. It consists of a running noose, the end of which terminates in a round loop or eye. A piece of strong cord passes through the eye of the snare and secures it to a brick or a stout peg driven firmly into the ground. The noose is kept in its proper place by a pin, a forked piece of wood which is driven into the ground and supports the straight end of the noose. Opinions differ as to the precise height at which a snare should be suspended ; but as a general rule the lower edge of the snare is set about seven inches above the ground, if it is intended for a hare in the open. If a snare is

set in a hedge, the wire noose is smaller than if it was set in the open field ; the reason is that the feet of the animal push the snare up if it is creeping through a hole. Poachers commonly measure the height of a snare with the hand, elevating it to the level of the thumb raised at right angles to the palm. The snare is made of different qualities of wire ; very thin wire is apt to snap in frosty weather. A single strand of wire would be useless. From six to eight strands of wire are generally considered to suffice. The wire is plaited in strands by various methods. One of the handiest for a poacher is to attach a long piece of wire to the 'missis's' kettle handle, and twirl the kettle round and round, when, of course, it binds the wire together. The wires take up very little room in the operator's pocket. Nor is it difficult to peg the snare firmly down. The poacher has to study the most rapid methods of action, for he may at any time have to pick up a snared hare and run for it. He cannot stop to untie difficult knots, and consequently he fixes it with the 'timber-hitch,' or some similar device.

Any schoolboy could *set* a snare. But to manipulate snares *successfully*, the poacher must serve his apprenticeship in the green fields, or he would never know where to choose the spot. The trained eye searches for what is termed the 'trod' of the hare,

*i.e.* the track which the animal is accustomed to traverse in visiting and returning from its feeding grounds. If she is chased or terrified, the creature flies in whatever direction she thinks safety may be found ; but so long as she is left at liberty undisturbed to nibble the tender shoots of clover at her will, she ambles playfully along the favourite winds that lie half hidden in the labyrinths of long grass. If you watch the rambles of a hare, I think you will find that she 'runs all roads,' as one of the poachers expresses it. A rabbit on the other hand generally runs straight. Of course a tiro would be unable to distinguish the 'trod' or path of a hare from that of a rabbit. Not so the poacher. He is rarely deceived, for he is a specialist and his skilled eye instantly distinguishes the run of a hare, because it is larger and broader than that of a rabbit. But he is not content to know where the hare runs. If he means to 'riddle the fields,' he searches all round the hedges and dykes to find the hare's bolt-hole, or 'smout,' as it is called in the North of England. Rabbits jump over obstacles. Hares try to find a way through them or under them. Of course hares can jump beautifully, but their habit is to seek a bolt-hole ; so the hare's 'smout' may lead under a gate or through a dyke, it makes no difference to the poacher. He wishes to

set his snares in the run of the hare near the bolt-hole. The 'smout' or 'spout' (both terms are employed) of a hare usually proceeds in a slanting direction, whereas that of a rabbit is relatively straight. Sometimes a hare is forced to make her exit through a hole in the thorn hedge, in which case a few flakes of down will often be found adhering to the thorns, a trifle to the public, but to the eye of the poacher full of significance. Before setting the snares, the poacher blocks up the smout holes, and fixes fifty or sixty snares in the various 'trods' or hare paths, which, of course, radiate all round the field. The poacher watches his snares according to his opportunity. His object is to secure as many hares as possible in the shortest possible time. Farm labourers, of course, have special facilities for visiting their snares. A small piece of white paper is often attached to the peg which holds the snare, to enable the operator to distinguish it in the dark. As soon as a hare enters a snare, she begins to scream and strikes the long end of the wire with one of her feet, winding it round the limb in her frantic effort to escape, which only hastens her doom, for it tightens the fatal noose. The poacher is generally near at hand, for he lives in dread of discovery, and must work as quietly as possible. Most of his business is done in the small

hours. Mr. L'Aigle Cole mentions a hairbreadth escape which happened to a poacher, one of whose snares the keeper had found with a hare in it, and hid up close by to catch the poacher when he came for it. 'Luckily for the poacher, he came earlier than usual, and had already taken several hares from his other snares, when, nearing this one, he noticed a fresh footprint on a molehill, and instantly crawled with the greatest caution through the underwood; when to his horror he almost knocked against the keeper, who, however, was so sound asleep that the poacher not only took the hare from his snare, but re-set it for pure impudence, and got safely away.'<sup>1</sup>

The drawback to the use of snares is, that the poacher can set these engines all round a field in a very short time. The man from Penicuik told me that on a certain occasion he set fifty-seven snares in a single field. Unfortunately for him, he was caught in the act of visiting them, and soon found his wrists fettered with a bracelet of his own contrivance. He had prided himself on the stoutness of his gear, and he learnt to rue it. It would be easy to enlarge upon poaching usages to a much greater extent than I have done yet; but enough has been said to put the game preserver on his mettle. If he can employ a

<sup>1</sup> *The Nineteenth Century*, 1893, p. 474.

retired poacher as one of his watchers, he may pick up some additional wrinkles. Country carriers, milkmen, waggoners and other humble men traffic in the carriage of game. Publicans and local dealers facilitate cash advances upon fur and feather. The village barber is often sounded by strangers as to the likeliest receiving-house for a wild rabbit, and his information is generally at the service of his customers ; for he is loquacious by habit, and thinks evil of no man.

SHOOTING THE HARE

BY

THE HON. GERALD LASCELLES



## CHAPTER I

### SHOOTING

NATURALLY, in modern times and with modern appliances, the most common method of taking hares has been by shooting. By this means nineteen-twentieths of the hares annually realised in Great Britain are killed. The number of those taken by other means, exclusive of poaching, is small. In the great Waterloo Coursing Meeting itself under one hundred hares are killed, and the total number killed at all the coursing meetings of the kingdom would not reach the total destroyed only a few years ago on some of our great game-preserving manors. A few years ago, I may well say, for since the Ground Game Act of 1880 came into existence, not only have men ceased to make big bags of hares,<sup>1</sup> but the animal itself has on many thousands of acres become absolutely extinct. Leaving out all questions of sport, it

<sup>1</sup> Except in a few favoured districts. At Cheveley Park, Newmarket, for example, 2,442 hares were gathered in the season of 1894-95.—Ed.

is difficult to see what good has resulted to anyone from this unfortunate piece of legislation. Never once have we heard a good word spoken for it either by labourer, tenant, or landlord. The shooting tenant—to whom the modern landlord looks for the means to pay the charges on his estate, much as the Irish peasant relies on his pig for the means to pay his rent, or rather did rely when rents were honestly paid in Ireland—is the principal sufferer, because farmers do not care to forego any right they may possess—however useless or unsought it may have been—in order to assist a stranger. On some few estates, within my knowledge, the Act has been a dead letter because the farmers' relations with their landlord were such that they did not desire to vex him or curtail his enjoyment of his own property for the sake of any advantage forced upon them without their request by the Government of the day. Especially do I recall the remark of one of the tenants on Lord Wenlock's Escrick estate, near York, when, a year or so after the passing of the Ground Game Act, a passing stranger in the hunting-field paused to remark to the old farmer, 'Well ! you seem to keep plenty of hares in spite of the Act, my friend ?' 'Ay !' was the answer, 'and we had need to have plenty when my lord comes shooting, I can tell you.' There was a kindly ring about the tone and an indi-

cation of cordial good feeling that showed that, Act or no Act, the sport of his old friend and landlord—a relation enduring two generations of the respective families without a break in the intimacy—should suffer from no act of his old tenant. There is, even in these straitened times, many and many a similar instance to be named. No longer ago than October 1893 I saw killed in three days' partridge-shooting very close upon 300 hares, shot in the turnips alone, without touching a single covert. Here again most cordial relations exist, and have existed for generations, between landlord and tenant, and every consideration is paid by each party to the interests of the other.

But when hard times arrive and, instead of being able to maintain his shooting at the proper level, a sporting rent becomes an important consideration to the landowner, a different condition of affairs arises. A stranger, employing strange keepers, finds it hard to interest the farmers in his behalf. He has no control over their actions as regards ground game, however high may be the rent he has disbursed ; and in but too many cases, after a few years of bickering and discontent, the shooting is thrown back upon its owner's hands. He finds it sadly impaired if he wishes to retain it himself, and much reduced in money value if he is still compelled to place it on the market. In

this way the value of residential property is directly impaired, fewer and fewer capitalists care to invest in land which they can no longer deal with as their own property, and less and less money is brought into the rural districts. What wonder, then, that our farmers crowd the bankruptcy courts, or retire with the wreck of their capital from the attempt to make a living out of their holdings, while the labourer throngs into the towns to aid in the congestion of the labour market and to swell the ranks of the unemployed ! No allotments or village councils will attach him to the land. What he wants is abundance of suitable employment at good wages, with a comfortable home to lie down in at night ; and how can these desiderata be arrived at unless everything is done to attract capital into the rural districts, so that the riches accumulated in towns may be spent in the improvement and beautifying of the country estates, giving abundance of work to all the labourers obtainable, and diffusing plenty around ?

With Acts of Parliament like the Ground Game Act, and the tendency of the Legislature to multiply such restrictions upon the use and enjoyment of property, it is no wonder that most capitalists fight shy of land, and less money is laid out for the benefit of the labourer and village resident than was the case

before campaigns against 'the reign of the parson and the landlord' formed 'planks in the platform' of a party in the State. In some few cases, no doubt, preservation was carried to excess, and disputes arose between shooting and farming tenants; but, as a rule, liberal compensation was forthcoming, and the farmer in the end suffered nothing. The days, however, when the

Merry brown hares came leaping  
Over the meadow and hill

have passed away, probably for ever, on most English manors. Never, perhaps, will such days of sport come again as were obtained in the 'sixties' and 'seventies.' On December 22, 1865, Lord Londesborough with three other guns, shooting at Scoreby in Yorkshire, killed 585 hares, besides a similar number of pheasants. In 1864, five guns on the Selby estate of the same ardent sportsman killed 531 on November 11. On the Gedling estate of the late Lord Chesterfield in Nottinghamshire, six guns on November 30, 1869, bagged 781 hares, and on December 3 of the same year no less than 823 fell to the same number of guns. While in 1878, by six guns shooting at Londesborough, 1,217 were killed in three consecutive days in the month of November.

Norfolk has always been in the front where game

is concerned, and in the period we speak of hares swarmed all over the county, and heavy bags were made on most of the great manors. At Gunton, on December 3, 1875, 614 were killed by eight guns; and in former years hares were very abundant on this manor, where game-preserving has always been most admirably understood and carried to great perfection. It used to be the practice here to kill down the superabundant jack hares rigidly, and a shilling per head was given to the keepers for all that they could bring in during the months of February and March. In some years as many as four hundred have been thus accounted for, which will give some idea of the abundance that was to be found on this manor. A notable day's shooting took place on November 17, 1881, when in Antingham Wood, a spinney of *thirteen* acres, the following bag was killed by seven guns, viz. :

Hares	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	257
Rabbits	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	124
Pheasants	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	313
Partridges	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<u>39</u>
								733

Very rarely has such a bag been realised in so small an acreage of covert; and as regards the hares killed, the numbers will perhaps never be obtained in this country again on a similar extent of land.

In open ground, and especially large turnip fields where hares abound, it is often necessary to drive them to the guns in order to kill them. For the shooters the sport is not great, as it merely consists in being concealed behind a hedge and keeping very still till the hares come quietly up. But the keeper who is in charge of the proceedings has many matters to think of. He must outflank the hares so as to cut them off from covert. He must have his beaters sufficiently near together to prevent their walking over and past hares in their seats, and he must, above all, avoid going too fast, or making very much noise, or else the hares will inevitably sit very close and steal away behind his men. Chief essential of all, he must make his drives down wind, or the hares, travelling quietly forward, will both scent and hear the concealed sportsmen, just as deer would, and will break to right or left in the most provoking way, just out of shot of the guns, and too far off to be turned by the flanking beaters.

And here let me put in a word, addressed chiefly to the youthful sportsman, never to fire a long shot at a hare going straight away from him. It is but useless cruelty. I will suppose, in these days of weapons of precision and careful education, that all our young friends have learned to 'hold pretty

straight.' They do not, therefore, miss the unfortunate hare, as little bits of fleck floating in the air demonstrate ; but what becomes of her ? Occasionally she is picked up by the beaters, dead, in a hedgerow three fields away, but more often she is killed—an emaciated wreck—by some shepherd's dog or cur, three weeks afterwards. The error and the cruelty are not chargeable to the powers of the gun, nor to the aim of the owner, but to his bad and hasty judgment in firing shots, some of which no doubt will occasionally kill, but which in nine cases out of ten he ought to leave alone. I recollect the case being neatly summed up by a sportsman of my acquaintance, somewhat precise in language, but not very skilful with the gun, whom I had watched missing hare after hare that rose almost between his legs, and fled from him straight down the drills of a turnip field which, for some reason or other, we were beating in that direction. ' You see, my dear sir,' said he, ' the reason that I do not kill these hares is that, in running directly from me down the furrows, they persistently expose to my aim that part of their persons which is *least immediately mortal*.' It was very true, no doubt, but I do not think I have ever heard it put in that way before or since.

Thirty yards is the outside range at which hares should be shot when running straight away from the



' MAKING FOR THE HEDGEROW '



sportsman. The gun should be aimed well up, above the black tip of the ears ; the least dwelling on the aim, or failure to keep the gun well up, will result in broken backs or smashed hind legs, and a series of those piteous screams that give such a sickening feeling to every good sportsman, no matter how old, or how well accustomed to such scenes he may have become. When the hare is crossing the gun she may easily be killed ten yards further off than when going directly away. In this case the gun must be held well forward and slightly 'swung,' or kept moving in the direction in which the hare is running. Nothing should be looked at except the head ; indeed, for shooting purposes rabbits and hares should be regarded as consisting of their heads alone—all the rest is of no account. Few men have ever yet missed ground game by shooting too far in front of it, and my advice to a novice who found himself frequently 'tailoring' and maiming his hares, or missing them altogether, would be to try if for a few shots he could not succeed in putting the charge into the ground one yard in front of the hare's nose. A few experiments of this kind would soon show him where he was in the habit of shooting, and if he were a pupil capable of reflection, and willing to be instructed, it would not be long before he began, not only to kill ground game,

but to kill it properly by shooting it in the proper place.

A fully choked gun in skilful hands is very effective in the open fields, and it is surprising to see the distances at which hares can be killed, and well killed, one after another, with such a weapon ; but for shooting in covert or for rabbit-shooting such a gun will not do. It requires considerable ability to hit ground game at all, at short ranges, with a weapon of this sort, and when hit the creature is as often as not cut in two or blown to pieces. For general purposes a gun very slightly choked, if at all, in the right barrel, and what is termed 'medium choke' in the left, will do very well ; and, indeed, for all game such a weapon is in ordinary hands the most suitable. Most people would find their general shooting vastly improved if they put their pride in their pocket, had very nearly all the 'choke' taken out of their brand-new hammerless ejectors, and gave up trying to achieve those amazing 'gallery shots' which are very effective, no doubt, when they do come off, but which are successful only at such an interval of time as is described in certain circles as a 'blue moon.'

## CHAPTER II

## THE BLUE HARE—POACHING—HAWKING

OWING more to the beautiful surroundings in which it makes its home than to any special attractions of its own, the Scotch, mountain, or blue hare is a favourite object of the sportsman's pursuit. Smaller than the brown or English hare, with shorter ears and a curiously woolly coat, it is so common on many Highland moors as to be a great nuisance to the dogs of the grouse-shooter, until he has thoroughly broken them from noticing 'fur' in any shape. As these hares lie very closely and are tame enough, there is not much sport to be obtained by walking them up, and on hills where they are numerous it is usual to kill them down by arranging one or two big drives during the season. Some little care and organisation are needed to bring one of these drives to a successful issue. It is the peculiarity of this breed of hare to make straight for the hilltops when disturbed, sometimes to a top of considerable elevation. The guns, which should be

pretty numerous, must be placed in position in a wide ring around the top of the mountain, or, at the least, along the upper part of one face thereof. A calm, clear day is therefore necessary, and settled weather is a *sine quâ non*, or else, just as the drive begins, some envious cloud may settle over the hill, and by its impenetrable mist destroy all chance of sport. The best period to choose is one when the wind has been blowing steadily from one quarter for some days. It will be found that all the hares have deserted the exposed sides of the hills, and are congregated on the leeward faces and in the more sheltered corries. The sportsmen can thus, without disturbing the ground, ascend the hill upon the windward side, and get quietly into their stations without moving the hares, that are mostly upon the opposite face of the hill, and, crossing the top or shoulders of the ground, can form a line covering the whole top of the hill from the leeward side.

A weary climb brings us at length to the summit, over which we have to pass in order to gain our station on the further side ; but, however intent on sport we may be, we cannot but pause to take in the beauty of the scene that is spread out before us on a glorious morning in the latter part of October. Be the spot where it may, in the Highlands of Scotland

the view cannot but be a lovely one. Perchance we may find ourselves in Perthshire, on a low range of hills where the heather struggles in patches to within a hundred yards of the summit, which is crowned by rough broken rocks that seem like a rude cairn erected by the hands of the Titans of olden days. On the one hand Schehallion rears its noble outline, crowned with the early snowfall of the declining autumn, and seamed as to his sides with great streaks of glistening splendour as the sun gleams upon the masses of snow lodged in the hollows that run downwards from the summit.

On the other side lies the huge dark mass of Ben Lawers, along whose base runs the silver streak of Loch Tay, melting away into the distance at the foot of noble Ben More. In the distance peak after peak rears its head, till far, far away a white cloud of more pronounced outline than usual attracts our eye, and we are told that Ben Nevis itself is, for once in a way, within our ken. To the north and east stretches an imposing range of noble hills, which we can recognise as the Grampians. They seem to have collected more snow than the other peaks, and our attendant gillie points out a streak or two, now prominent indeed, but which he tells us are ever visible throughout the whole summer. Between us and the Grampians we can detect another silver streak, which indicates the course of

Loch Rannoch, and gives an impression of vast distance in the view before us.

A whole day of gazing would not exhaust the pleasure to be derived from a prospect of such magnificence ; but we have climbed to this eminence on other thoughts intent, and must give our attention to the business of the day.

Far away below us we can see the large ring of drivers, which has encircled the hill and is working its way upwards towards our seat. Soon the clear atmosphere brings to our ears the shouts and cries of the men and boys, mostly couched in a tongue unknown to us, as they rouse hare after hare from its seat and send it fleeing towards us up the hill. Now and then arises a positive storm of shrieks and objurgations as a self-willed hare resolutely turns back and breaks through the line of the beaters. Soon the hillside between us and the men is alive with hares running in long strings along the little paths that seam the hillsides, skirting the burns, circling round the big rocks, but leading ever upwards. It is just the time when their coats begin to change ; some are in the brown garb of summer, a few are nearly all white, many are in the transition stage, and of a kind of skewbald colour. A strange, weird Jacob's flock they look as they come stringing

and hopping along the hillside, now sitting up to reconnoitre, now scudding in terror as if the beaters were at their very heels. Lower down, scattered single shots tell us that the extreme left is engaged, and in a few minutes a brisk fusillade has begun. Near to the rock behind which we sit are two of the little paths we have described, one above and one below, and it is curious to note how every hare follows one line or the other without divergence. The range is soon established, and as each hare emerges from the shelter of a big rock on the one path, and crosses a flat patch of grass on the other, he has to be rolled over cleanly and well. As sport, or as a test of good shooting, it must be owned that this form of hare-killing has but little to recommend it. Were it not for the necessity of killing down these prolific little creatures, and for the great charm and beauty of the surroundings, few sportsmen would care to take part in such drives ; but on shootings where hares are numerous they are a necessity. On some hills and in some years the number that may be killed seems to depend simply upon the time and trouble that are taken about the matter. Many big bags have been made, especially in Perthshire, but the largest of which I have a record was made in November 1889, when six guns shooting at Logie-

almond obtained 1,289 blue hares in one day. Such figures as these show the absolute necessity of systematically killing down animals that increase and multiply so abundantly.

The Irish hare is a variety of the Scotch blue, and closely resembles it, except that it is a size larger. It is not sufficiently abundant on any shootings known to the writer to afford days such as have just been described ; but when found on the lower hills which are encircled by enclosed country, with just a crown of rideable heather on the top, it affords excellent sport to a pack of harriers, and will often run straight from the top of one hill, across the intervening enclosed valley, to the top of the nearest hill or range of hills, and capital gallops are often the result of this peculiarity.

Since first game laws were passed and preservation of any sort became prevalent, the hare has been the chief object of the poacher's attacks. Easy of capture, valuable to sell, and easy to find in the days before the Ground Game Act of 1880 made it well-nigh as extinct as the dodo in half the counties of England, the poacher has always marked the hare for his own. Many are his contrivances, the first and simplest being the ordinary wire snare, set in the 'smeuses' of the fence. Simple as this device is, it



'SNARED'



is not every man that can set it so as to catch hares, and it is by no means desirable to give to those who cannot printed instructions which may assist them to obtain the necessary knowledge. The careful keeper will, of course, watch every 'smeuse' in every fence for snares—that is to say, where the land is occupied by his employer. Where the farm is let, there is nothing to prevent the farmer from lining his fences with wire nooses. But if there be suspicions of foul play, the only chance is for the keeper and his assistants to watch the snares by relays, till they see who comes to take them up, or to take away a hare caught in them. The watch must be unremitting, and the plan has often resulted in the capture of a poacher of the less wary type ; but older hands are pretty sure to detect something wrong, and to give their snare a wide berth for ever and aye, after they realise that its presence is known to others besides themselves.

A very common but very dangerous practice among keepers is that of putting a dead hare or rabbit in any snare they find, and lying in wait to see who comes to take it out. Although in nine cases out of ten the man who comes to the snare will be the guilty setter, yet it is possible that an innocent passer-by may be attracted to the spot or be charged

with the offence most unjustly. But even if the real poacher be detected and brought before the local bench, the trick is now so well known that a direct question put to the keeper, either by the defendant or by some magistrate on the bench, will elicit the truth or a suspicion of it, when a dismissal of the case will almost surely follow, and a crafty poacher add another escape to his long list of 'narrow shaves' and another wrinkle for future defence to an experience already sufficiently comprehensive ; while the keeper, who has spent much time and trouble over the case, earns nothing by his superabundant zeal except rebuke and disappointment.

From the sportsman's point of view, the best and most appreciable form of poaching is that done by the aid of trained lurchers ; for some of these dogs, however reprehensible may be the use made of them, are among the best sporting animals ever trained. Wiry and hard, with speed enough to turn a good hare or to catch a weak one, with excellent noses, and with intelligence to make the best use of both qualities, a first-class lurcher can be converted into a 'game destroyer' of powerful calibre. Such dogs were not uncommon in Norfolk some twenty-five years ago, and the best of them commanded high prices, save when its owner had got 'into trouble,' and the poor

wife, hard put to it to maintain herself and her children during the absence of the breadwinner in some one of Her Majesty's gaols, would gladly sacrifice his dog for the sake of having one mouth less to feed. In this way such an one fell into my possession. It was a rather small, active, brindled animal, built on the lines of a good greyhound—a bitch, like all poachers' dogs ; for, as the keeper is often accompanied by his retriever or night dog, a dog would be likely to stand to exchange civilities, and so give the keeper a chance to approach within shot ; a bitch, on the other hand, will bolt at the first appearance of danger, and is generally taught to make her way home alone without betraying her master. Being kept continually in the dark, and never allowed to fraternise with strangers, their senses are especially acute at night, and they will rarely allow any stranger to approach near enough to identify them.

The usual way of working a lurcher of this kind is to drive quietly along the roads in a spring-cart till a likely field of seeds or pasture is reached ; at a noiseless signal the dog is out of the cart and ranging the field just like a wide-ranging setter. Any hare sitting or feeding is found by nose, roused, and a course begins. Meanwhile the poacher has quickly set across the gateway a light silk net, easily carried in the pocket.

The lurcher, if well up to its business, will follow the hare at three-quarter speed, driving her towards the gate, towards which she will probably run of her own accord. Should she attempt to make for a smouse in the fence, the dog with a dash will either turn her, or pick her up and bring her to his master at the gallop. If necessary, however, he will turn her again and again, and so drive her to the fatal gate, just as a clever collie will drive sheep. Once there, a rapid dash on the part of the dog entangles her in the net, and she is seized by the waiting poacher ere one single cry breaks the stillness of the night. The whole party is on the move again in a few seconds. The dog gets her wind in the bottom of the cart, and is ready again as soon as a fresh field is reached.

Should no hare be roused, the dog comes straight back to her master ; and nothing more graceful or more neat can be imagined than the beautiful way in which my purchase would 'double' over a high gate, and bound straight into the cart, where she would go to ground under the straw and an old sack or two, so that it required a sharp examination to detect her.

There is only one way to defeat this system of poaching : it is to drive all the seed fields to the gates, having previously netted them, during the daytime ; the hares, as soon as caught, are set free by men stationed

ready. A hare that has once been thus netted in a gateway, and handled, will require an extraordinarily good dog to force her through one again. This plan can be adopted where it is known that many good lurchers exist. It will save scores of hares. It is also a useful plan to paint white the three bottom bars of all gates. But careful watching and general supervision of the ground will do more to prevent poaching than any especially crafty devices, and where a manor has a reputation for being well looked after it will only rarely be troubled by poachers of this class.

Another, and possibly little known, method of taking hares is by hawking. It is, however, rather to be regarded as a *tour de force* in sporting matters than as a means whereby they can be 'readily reduced into possession,' as the lawyers phrase it. The feat has been performed in modern times in two different ways : first, by means of the long-winged gerfalcon ; secondly, of the short-winged goshawk. For the former method a very open country is needed ; the flight is often of long duration, for the falcon, soaring above the fleeting hare, will endeavour to stun and confuse her by repeated blows, ere she will 'bind to' or finally seize her quarry. In this kind of flight the hare has every chance to make good her escape to some friendly

covert, not indeed without sustaining a shrewd buffet or two, or perchance getting one of her ears slit, but still alive and safe. Ofttimes she will turn to meet the stoop, and, bounding four or five feet into the air, allow the falcon to pass below her, or, by thus springing to meet her, baffle the stoop altogether. Or if a rut or bramble brake afford the scantiest concealment, she may squat therein and is safe, for the long-winged hawks will not pounce upon and seize their quarry thus motionless on the ground. To prevent this, it was in old times the custom to run, with the hawk, a slow lurcher, and it was probably to his efforts that the hare succumbed after being knocked about by the hawk.

I have myself in recent years seen even a peregrine stoop at a brown hare and knock her head over heels as though shot, while on three or four different occasions the blue hare has been fairly killed by the trained peregrine, just as the brown hare has been taken by the gerfalcon. An account of these remarkable flights will be found in that volume of the 'Badminton' series which relates to Falconry.

The flight with the goshawk is another affair. It is the nature of these short-winged hawks to seize their prey upon the ground, by one swift dash out of a tree, or, in the case of trained birds, from off the fist of

their master. But it requires a very courageous and powerful hawk to hold so muscular a quarry as a full-grown hare, and the instances of goshawks that could do so regularly are few and far between. None, perhaps, have been better at the work than one that was trained in 1891 by Sir Henry Boynton, of Burton Agnes, which time after time captured, in the open, stout old Yorkshire Wold hares. Some of the flights lasted for half a mile, as the hawk, baffled time after time in making good her grip, would renew the chase almost as a falcon throws herself up after her stoop. But the capture of the hare with a trained bird of prey, though a very fascinating and exciting form of sport, must be looked upon as exceptional.

The Bonelli eagle has lately been trained with success by M. Barrachin, a French falconer. In his case the eagle was chiefly used for taking rabbits, but there is little doubt that it could be as well trained to take hares, and on open downs this quarry would well display its sweeping powers of flight, and be worth following up. The attempt is worth making by English falconers who have ground suitable for the sport, and if it succeeded a new feature would be added to falconry in this country.

The only instance of hare-hawking in modern times being regularly followed was that of the sport

shown about the year 1869 by the establishment of the late Maharajah Dhuleep Singh at Elveden in Norfolk. There was plenty of open heath land and of large fields well suited to the purpose. Just at that time the Maharajah had sent John Barr, the falconer, to Iceland, to bring back a large stock of these noble falcons. At one time he had as many as thirty-five in his mews, and three or four of these were regularly trained to fly the big brown hares of which he had so many on his estate. No very great number was killed, for disease played havoc with the beautiful falcons, which were ill suited to the damp English climate ; but as to their power to take hares, and the possibility of success at this flight, there could be no doubt.

# COURSING THE HARE

BY

CHAS. RICHARDSON



## CHAPTER I

### PRIVATE COURSING

THOUGH coursing is probably the oldest existing sport, it is only of late years that any attention has been paid to it from a literary point of view, and even now authoritative works on coursing are very scarce. The 'Coursing Calendar,' in its present form, was begun in 1857, with 'Stonehenge' for its editor, and in 1882 the 'Greyhound Stud Book' came into existence. Previously to 1857 some few odd calendars had been issued, but no printed record of the sport was published before 1828, when 'The Courser's Manual or Stud Book,' by Thomas Goodlake, made its appearance. This work was originated by a Mr. Barnard, of the Malton Coursing Club, who died long before the work was completed, and, leaving his unarranged materials to Mr. Goodlake, that gentleman brought the volume to a successful issue. There was then an interim before 'Thacker's Calendar' made its intermittent appearances ; but

since 1857 the records of public coursing have been fairly well kept, though it is a fact that many of the smaller and less important meetings never find their way into the Calendar at all—a fact which can be easily understood when it is stated that the National Coursing Club do not require a return from each secretary of a meeting, after the manner of the Jockey Club and National Hunt Committee, which insist that every clerk of the course shall comply with their regulations in this respect. At the same time, it is only fair to state that the secretaries of all small coursing meetings are unpaid officials, while the Jockey Club officials are all licensed and paid for their services. The history of coursing has been presented in Goodlake, Thacker, in the Stud Book, and in the Coursing volume of the Badminton Library ; and seeing that the last-mentioned work is of so recent a date, I shall not attempt to carry my readers over the well-worn ground, but shall divide my limited space between the two conditions under which the sport has long been pursued in this country.

Of these two, the simpler is coursing at home, for the pure love of the sport, where no monetary considerations can come into play. The other is the running of greyhounds in public, a form of sport which involves the preparation of the animals

by an experienced trainer, trying them before they run in public, entering them for stakes, and undergoing—to a certain extent—all the anxieties and worries which are inseparable from the conduct of a public kennel.

Before treating of public coursing, which is far more largely pursued than the older branch of the sport, I will say something about private coursing, once among the most popular of all country sports, but now almost fallen into decay, and followed only in remote districts where the march of the times has not been very pronounced.

In the last century, when fox-hunting (or indeed any hunting by scent) was comparatively little known, and only practised in some few favoured parts of the country (I think there were not twenty packs of foxhounds in existence at the beginning of the present century), coursing the hare with greyhounds was very general ; and though the middle of the century saw the gradual springing up of coursing clubs, the old-fashioned country squires were long in joining the ranks of public coursers, and many of them, until a generation or two ago, bred and kept greyhounds, which they used entirely for their own amusement. By degrees they were weaned from private to public coursing ; and with the advent of railways they found

means to send their dogs about, and to run them for stake money, instead of keeping them for home use.

The smaller and poorer squires and many of the farmers still kept up their kennels for home sport only, and until the pernicious Hares and Rabbits Act was passed these gentry continued to enjoy their coursing in a simple and homely fashion.

Those who lived in the more remote districts have been, naturally enough, the last to adopt public coursing ; but even in some of these districts, where the squire used to grant a day's leave to his tenants and their friends, the day, originally quite private, with no stake money allowed, became gradually more and more public, until at last it assumed the proportions of a public coursing, and though, perhaps, still confined to dogs nominated by the tenants, nevertheless brought together a crowd of the neighbouring public, and did not escape the notice of the reporter for the local newspaper. This, however, is an age of rushing into print, and we have seen in a mining district a six-dog stake at £1 apiece which produced a report of a quarter of a column !

Private coursers of the old type were, in nineteen cases out of twenty, landowners, or tenant-farmers who had leave to course, the twentieth case being that of

the individual (there used to be one or two in every country district) who had no leave and asked for none, but kept greyhounds, and never lost an opportunity of running them at a hare. I well remember one of these village worthies in my very youthful days. When inclined to work he was journeyman to a blacksmith ; but he preferred poaching, and, as can be imagined, was well known to the local constabulary. On one occasion I heard that this man, who had taught me how to tickle trout, and was thoroughly cognisant of every country sport, had broken his leg by a fall from a ladder. Now is the time to buy his brindled greyhound, I thought, and I went to his shanty with all the ready money I could raise just after the time of the Christmas tips. I found 'Old Jack' very angry at being pinned to his bed, but hard up and good to deal with ; and after about an hour's severe bargaining I led the brindle away, poorer by twenty-two and sixpence, but happy in the possession of what I thought to be quite the best greyhound in the parish. Mind you, I had never seen the dog at work, but all the labourers in the village had long regarded him with an extraordinary amount of veneration, and numerous tales had reached me concerning the great number of hares which the old man disposed of at the nearest market town.

Here I may state that 'Jack' had 'leave' over one or two small, rough farms, which belonged to a non-resident landlord, and that he took out a shooting license, being thus able to dispose of his game in open market. Of course the quantity he sold, presumably from off the very poor 200 acres where his leave extended, was suspiciously large, but he was a sly old chap, and, known as he was to be a regular poacher, seemed to have a charmed life as far as the gamekeepers were concerned.

Well, I took my treasure home, gave him a tremendous grooming, fed him, and locked him up for the night, giving him a well-littered kennel to himself. That he howled and barked for twelve hours without ceasing I need hardly say; but he seemed glad to see me in the morning, and very shortly after daylight I had him in the slips with the best dog in the kennel. (It must be understood that my father bred and kept greyhounds.) A hare was soon found, but, to my dismay, the brindle hardly strained at the slips, and as soon as delivered was left immeasurably behind. The hare topped a wall at the end of the field, followed by the old dog, but the new-comer, when he reached the wall, came to a dead stop, and then proceeded to canter along with his nose down. Afterward he drew out into the middle of

the field, began to quarter the ground like a pointer, and at length he trotted back to us.

We (a not very sympathetic gamekeeper and myself) were quite at a loss to understand the proceedings, but we reflected that the twelve hours of howling in a strange kennel had probably demoralised him, and we decided not to try him again until he had become settled in his new quarters. At the end of a week or so we put him in the slips with a sapling barely a year old, and when the slip was made away shot the sapling with a tremendous lead, while the brindle ambled on for a while, and then began once more to quarter the ground.

I was now very angry, and went in hot haste to Old Jack, who was still confined to his room. The old boy did not seem surprised to see me, and listened to my tale with a merry twinkle in his eye. At last he spoke. 'You must not be hard on me, Master Charles. I wanted the money badly, and I thought you would know that I only used Spider for driving the fields at night. Thinks I to myself, what does Master Charles want with the brindled dog? Surely he must be going to drive the hares into a gate net. Well, he'll soon find out what dog's been used for, and then he'll come back to me.'

And now I may as well describe one of the farmers'

days at which I used to be present something like twenty years ago, where the sport was, in its way, of the very best. It happened that one of my neighbours owned a hill farm about twenty miles from where we both lived, and it was his custom to give the tenant one day's coursing every year, on which occasion a party of neighbours from our district drove over, saw the sport, dined at the farmer's house, and drove back again at night. It was a biggish day, even for country people, who are accustomed to go a long way to covert, and as it invariably took place in December, it followed that much of the outward journey and all the getting home was done in the dark.

How well I remember those early starts ! One had to rise about 4.30 A.M., and the rendezvous used to be at the promoter's house at 5.45, for it was a terribly up and down country that we had to travel, and as the roads were never in good order, it used to take us a long three hours to reach the scene of action.

As a rule everyone was fairly punctual, for we were a sporting lot in our district, and all of us were accustomed to early rising. The walk to the starting-point was generally performed in black darkness, and the first glimpse of light was seen when we rounded the corner of our friend's drive and found the lamps of the four-in-hand brake staring us in the face.

Inside, a motley party, in ratcatcher kit, would be drinking hot coffee, trying to do justice to our host's very early breakfast, and loud were the grumblings when anyone was late. As well as I remember, we never waited for anyone ; but there were two late birds, who lived down the road we went. One of these, Parson ——, had always to be rattled up, and was made to do most of his dressing after he had taken his place in the brake ; but he was a rare cheery soul, and we would not have gone without him on any consideration. It was different with the other tardy guest, a *sporting man*—using the term in opposition to *sportsman*—whom we called 'Jingles,' and who once got really left—a circumstance which taught him to be ready on future occasions. This 'Jingles,' however, was good fun, too, because he professed to know all about it, and caused us great amusement by the complications he got into when he tried, late in the evening, to describe some particular course. By 6.15 we used to be fairly on our way, and at first the difficulties of our amateur whip with a scratch team, the country being inky black at the time, kept us alive. There was a locked turnpike gate, which gave us a lot of trouble, until we thought of sending a man with the fare overnight, and a request that the gate might be left open.

After travelling a couple of miles we left the main road for a country lane, and had an ascent of three miles, which brought us up to a height of 1,000 feet above sea level. This long hill we always walked up, and as a blood circulator it was most useful, no one ever feeling cold after he had struggled up to the top. About this period it began to get light, and as we gradually descended to the river, four miles below the hill, our spirits rose, if only at the magnificent prospect of country that lay before us. I will not particularise the locality, but I may say that the view I refer to is one of the finest in the kingdom. Miles upon miles of rolling hills, cultivated land in front, moors beyond, and the border mountains plainly visible on the horizon, though forty miles away. A magnificent stream, winding its way through rocks and woods, lay at our feet, and the only drawback which presented itself was that we had to ascend again, almost as high, when the stream was crossed. I may also say that this particular district is extremely free from mist and fog. I cannot recall a single coursing morning—and I must have been present on ten or a dozen of these days—when one was disappointed of the view. As we got lower down the country became more tame, but was singularly beautiful nevertheless ; even in mid-winter it had a wonderful greenness, caused by the

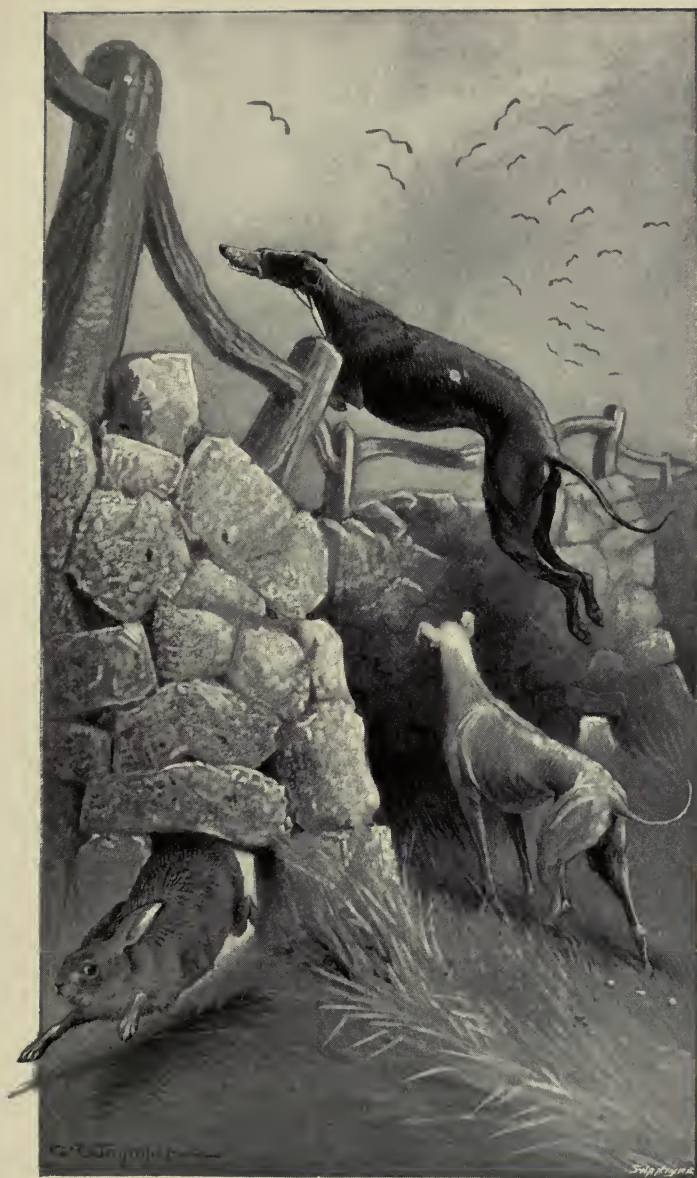
wealth of spruce and Scotch fir in the plantations, and by the fact that hollies everywhere abounded.

We used to pull up about half way, at the house of a friendly farmer, to give the team meal and water, and then came ten miles of difficulties. There was a choice of three or four lanes, all equally bad, and we never discovered which was the best road to take. Short cuts we tried, too, and once we were landed in a farmyard, with no egress except by the road we had come, whilst on a second occasion we drove into boggy ground, and lost something like half an hour before we could resume the journey.

We were on high land again for the last few miles in a wild country, where the shrill note of the curlew was constantly heard, where the black-game clubbed on the walls at daybreak, and, caring nothing for a carriage in the lane, let us get well within shot as we passed. At length the scene of operations was reached. 'High Law' Farm I may call it here, and High Law Farm consisted of some thirteen large rough grass enclosures, which averaged over ninety acres apiece, the farm being something like 1,100 acres in extent. As well as I recollect there was not a single tree on the whole estate, nor was there any covert except isolated pieces of gorse or heather and the natural roughness of the grass. The ground sloped

in all directions ; though a famous grazing-place for the hardier breeds of sheep and cattle, it was eminently favourable for hares, who found dry lying at all seasons on the hillsides, and were possessed of extraordinary stamina. At no other coursing ground which I have visited was the percentage of kills so small ; but puss had one big pull in her favour, and this often gave her a means of escape when she was hard pressed. It was as follows.

The enclosures were divided by stone walls, built up to a great height, and having often a sheep rail placed on the top, about a foot or more above the coping stones. At intervals, however, small holes had been made at the bottom of the walls (these are called smouts—doubtless a corruption of smeuse—in the North country), and while puss knew these places, and invariably bolted through when she got a chance, the greyhounds were unable to follow, but often struggled for a moment at the hole before drawing back to leap the wall. This of course allowed the hare a second law, and she would often double down the side of the wall and take advantage of the next ‘smout’ to return into the original field. A certain fluky element was thus introduced into the High Law coursing ; but that was of no account with the farmers, whose sympathies, by



‘RETURNING TO THE ORIGINAL FIELD’



the way, were mostly with the hare, and who were better pleased if she escaped, provided that she had given their dogs a fair course before she eluded them.

On arrival at the farmhouse, the first thing was breakfast (which we brought with us), and at this meal the tenant used to hand out his list of dogs. They were mostly farmers' greyhounds which had never run in public ; if any well-known performers came they were entered in their kennel names, and their individuality was kept quite secret. In fact, we always discouraged anyone from running what I may call a public dog at these meetings ; but occasionally an odd one or two were smuggled in for a trial, and it once happened that the great merits of a future big winner were discovered at the High Law Farm. The names of the dogs were put into a hat, and drawn in two, three, or four eight-dog stakes (according to the supply on hand), and sometimes, but not always, the owners agreed to a very small stake—5s. a dog, but never more. They did not come to gamble, in fact, and were content with a very nominal sum in the morning ; but later in the afternoon some of them wanted to run for money, and the individual courses used to give rise to a lot of subsequent matches. Indeed, on one occasion, when hares were very plentiful, and we had

run off four eights by two o'clock, no fewer than seven of the original courses were run over again, with a small sum depending on the issue each time.

The next business was choosing a judge, and one of our party generally filled the post, the farmers preferring a 'stranger' to one of themselves. We began operations in the field adjoining the house, and, as all the hares were walked up, it was a day of capital exercise for everyone. Slipper and judge walked in line with the crowd, and puss, unaccustomed to being coursed, used to lie very close, and was as often as not 'see ho'd' by one of the beat. When slipped at, these High Law hares used almost invariably to make for the high ground; almost as invariably they chose the sheep paths to run on, and if they happened to find one of these—firm enough to them, but slippery to their pursuers—in the early part of a course, they often got clear away without being properly used.

The crowd was always most enthusiastic, and certainly forty or fifty men seemed to make quite as much row as twenty times the number would do at a public meeting. You see, this was their one long-looked-forward-to coursing day of the year, and as their lives were spent in a far-away, thinly-populated, and lonely part of the country, they made the

most of their one day's sport. Pity it is that the Hares and Rabbits Act has put an end to such innocent country amusements, and driven the small farmers and their labourers to the nearest towns for amusement in their leisure time ; but there is no getting away from the fact that the Act referred to has done immense harm, and I am told that there has been no coursing on the High Law Farm for at least ten years, owing to the scarcity of hares. However good a sportsman a farmer might be, and no matter how much he tried to keep a head of hares, what was he to do when he knew that his neighbours were popping away at poor puss on every available occasion, and that if a hare left *his* farm in search of a meal, someone was lying in wait for her, who would shoot her from ambush as she lobbed down the hedgeside. It makes one who has known country coursing, and enjoyed sport with harriers in many places where neither now exists, infinitely sad to know that there are so few hares left, for, with the sole exception of the fox, no English animal ever afforded so much or so varied sport ; and what is saddest of all is that no sort of amusement has arisen in place of coursing and hare-hunting in those places where both sports used to flourish.

To return, however, to High Law. We generally

coursed until darkness overtook us. It sometimes happened, if the day was wild and stormy, that we had not quite run through our stakes ; but more often we finished with the supplementary matches I have referred to above, and under any circumstances there was plenty of sport. If the weather had been frosty the hares had the best of it ; if it had been wet, the dogs had less difficulty in accounting for their game ; but kills were always few in proportion to the number of courses decided, and once I remember that one solitary hare represented the whole bag. On that occasion there was a little wet snow on the ground, which was partially frozen underneath, and puss skimmed over it quite at her ease, while the greyhounds floundered and slipped about and were altogether outpaced.

As soon as the farmhouse was reached dry shoes and socks were requisitioned, and then came the dinner, sometimes held in the barn, sometimes in the kitchen, according to our numbers, and presided over by our neighbour the landlord, with the tenant of the farm in the vice-chair. This dinner, on account of our long drive home, was held at five o'clock, but it was generally ten before we began the homeward journey ; and meantime the dinner, and the songs and speeches which followed, were in the highest degree

entertaining. The farmer had an idea that he was musical (he once brought us the church choir, whom he had been training to sing the chorus of 'John Peel' to his solo), and he invariably asked all the local musical talent available. The result was curious in the extreme, for the locals attempted the highest flights, and it used to be a most difficult matter to keep one's countenance when a burly Northumbrian farmer was shouting out in broadest unshackled Doric some such songs as 'When other lips,' or 'Come into the garden, Maud.' The hunting songs went well, but they only came after we had had a dose of the sentimental, and by the musical farmer were evidently thought to be very poor stuff. There was a wonderful speechmaker, too, a lanky village schoolmaster in a tall hat, who used to see the sport on a very small pony, and give us his ideas on what had occurred in an after-dinner speech. He had the most extraordinary flow of language and quotation that I ever knew any man to be possessed of, and was very great in chaff, the parson being his especial butt. How such a man ever came to be wasting his sweetness in a tiny Northumbrian hamlet, a dozen miles from a railway, was always a mystery to us ; but there he was, and is to this day as far as I know, for not long since I received from him a uny

booklet of his own poems, which had been published by subscription amongst his neighbours.

A small covering of snow, two or three inches or less, or an overnight frost which has hardly disappeared, are both greatly in favour of the hare, whose rough pads are much better adapted to a slippery surface than the smooth feet of a greyhound ; and this reminds me that on two consecutive Saturdays in January 1883 I saw seven-and-twenty courses run without a single hare being killed. This happened at Broomshields, an old manorial estate which lies at a high altitude in the extreme west of the county of Durham, and is mostly in rough pasture, of much the same description as that we used to course over at the High Law. Coursing readers will remember that 1883 was about the zenith of the enclosed coursing meetings, and at that time there were monthly fixtures at Gosforth Park, where stakes of all sorts and sizes were run, and every class of greyhounds catered for. Well, Broomshields is quite in the wilds, and at least thirty-five miles from Gosforth Park ; but so strong was the coursing spirit in the county of Durham just then that there were little meetings on every estate (which acted as trials for Gosforth), and greyhounds kept in every village. Many of these were the property of innkeepers, small tradesmen, and even miners (a

working miner won the Gosforth Gold Cup of £1,000 with his own dog, Kangaroo II.) ; and as such gentry had no land to course over, and very little chance of leave, they would travel great distances—money never seemed any object to them—to obtain a satisfactory trial. The late squire of Broomshields<sup>1</sup> was almost as fond of coursing as he was of hunting, so that when his health made it imperative that he should give up riding to hounds, he cast about for means of procuring good coursing with as little trouble to himself as possible, and hit upon the idea of allowing trials to all respectable people on a Saturday. The fact soon became widely known in the district, and at one time the squire was literally swamped with applications.

The supply of game, however, was not equal to any great demands ; but for two or three seasons it was a case of ‘ first come, first served ’ on a Saturday, and I have entered the Broomshields stable-yard at 9 A.M. to find from thirty to forty greyhounds waiting to take their chance. One Saturday in January 1883 we had one of those doubtful mornings when frost, snow, and mild weather seem to be struggling for the mastery, and when a regular advertised meeting would

<sup>1</sup> John Maddison Greenwell, of Broomshields, one of the best all-round sportsmen the North Country ever produced ; he died in 1886.

certainly have been postponed. On this occasion some who had brought dogs went home again without running ; but others would have a trial at any price, and so we took the field. Hares were wild, as they generally are in such weather, and I daresay some of the slips were much too long ; but the fact remains that when we were stopped by a blinding snowstorm at two o'clock we had coursed twelve hares, all of whom had made good their escape.

During the following week we had a continuance of the changeable weather—snow one day, thaw the next, and then a frost before the snow had altogether disappeared. It was a miserable week for country folk, and things were little better on Saturday ; but the coursers had mostly come from lower-lying districts, and again many of them were willing to take their chance of laming their dogs on the frozen places. At the end of the afternoon out came the squire's little pocket-book—in which he made a memorandum after every course—and in high delight he exclaimed, ' We've had eighteen slips, seventeen courses, one no go, and not a hare killed ! ' which, coming on the top of the previous Saturday's doings, made a total of twenty-seven courses without a kill.

Mention of Broomshields reminds me that it is never advisable to send greyhounds away to a

meeting in charge of an amateur, as, no matter how capable a man may be with dogs in the matter of training and feeding, if he is a country bumpkin he is sure to meet someone at the coursing meeting who will take him in. He may get through a one-day meeting, at which he arrives in the morning, all right ; but if it is a two days' affair, and he has to stop in the town, the hour of his trouble is sure to come.

It happened about fifteen years ago that the squire just referred to and I owned a few greyhounds in partnership, and had some small measure of success at the little local one-day fixtures. This aroused our ambition, and we entered a brace of puppies in a thirty-two dog stake at an important meeting held in the North Riding of Yorkshire. I will not localise the place, but may say that my friend and I took up our quarters at Harrogate, the dogs being sent to the scene of action in charge of the squire's gamekeeper, who, though a good man, and a brave one, too, in his place, was (so he found out afterwards) quite out of place so far away from home. On the morning of the first day's coursing man and dogs met us at the railway station nearest to the ground, and it did not take us long to find out that all was well with the puppies. In fact their custodian told us he had gone to bed at eight o'clock, with both dogs in his room.

The morning wore on, and shortly after luncheon our dogs went to slips for their first courses. Neither had run in public before (although it was February), and consequently their chances did not seem promising. It happened, however, that these puppies were really as smart as we had judged them to be, and both won 'all ends up,' to quote the familiar coursing saying. The gamekeeper, who had been singularly silent all the forenoon, having lost his tongue in what he called 'foreign parts,' became both vociferous and noisy after the double win, and when we found him was holding forth to a little crowd, extolling the merits of his charges, and loudly proclaiming that they were the best dogs in England. When he saw us he quickly subsided ; but there was an excitement about him that did not augur well, and as they were only going once through the stakes that day, and consequently our dogs were not wanted until the morrow, we told him to take his dogs back to their temporary quarters at once, saying that we would call on our way to the railway station.

Now it happened that at that time some very bad characters (whose career was eventually cut short in connection with the much-deplored Netherby murder), were going the round of the coursing meetings and we, being aware of this fact, decided to take both

keeper and dogs to Harrogate with us for the night. We therefore left the ground early, and drove to the village where we thought our man was staying. We drew both the beerhouses blank, and were wondering what to do, when up came a man from our own part of the country, who told us that he had advised the keeper to clear out of the village, and that he (the keeper) had gone to another village, quite four miles away, and much further from the coursing ground. 'That's all right,' we thought, and we journeyed to Harrogate, feeling quite reassured, and much pleased that our man had had the good sense to adopt his neighbour's suggestion.

Next morning the local paper showed us that our pair had been well backed at the calling over of the card overnight, and doubtless the crowd had been impressed with the style in which they had won their first courses. It was a glorious morning, and our spirits rose high as we neared the end of our journey, but went down to zero again as we caught sight of Mr. Keeper's face on the platform. He looked as if he was going to be hung, and at once we guessed that something had happened. 'Where are the dogs?' we shouted. 'In the cab,' he replied; 'but they've been poisoned in the night, and I wish they'd poisoned me too.'

We followed him gloomily to the cab, and there the two brutes were lying, panting and miserable. What they had had we never knew, but it appears that their guardian, thinking himself quite secure in his fresh quarters, had locked his dogs into a stable and retired to rest. At five o'clock in the morning he had gone down to release them, when he found them, as he said, apparently dying. He got them an emetic, and this no doubt saved their lives, but one of them was never any good afterwards, and the other took months to recover.

We never found out who did the dirty work, but a hole had been cut in the window, and the poisoned meat thrown in ; doubtless the poisoner had found at the first village where the dogs had gone, and followed them. We sent the poor brutes home, and went on to the coursing ground, where someone quickly asked us what was the matter. It appears there were some long odds books open, and, though our dogs had been quoted at five and six to one respectively overnight, they had gone out to any odds you like in the morning. We went to the stewards and withdrew them, and we also offered a reward, but probably it was not large enough, as nothing ever came to light ; but it was some satisfaction to know that not a penny was got out of the individual courses,

which the poisoned dogs would certainly have lost had they run, and that several of the bookmakers who had laid against them overnight offered to scratch their bets when they became aware of the state of the case. I believe that some years ago many similar cases were brought to notice ; but the surroundings of public coursing are happily much clearer than they once were, and the National Coursing Club has of late been terribly but justly severe when cases of fraud have been brought under their notice.

## CHAPTER II

## PUBLIC COURSING

PUBLIC coursing has been in existence for at least 120 years, as all the records tell us that Lord Orford founded the Swaffham Club, in Norfolk, in the year 1776. This Lord Orford was a most eccentric man according to all accounts, but he was a thorough sportsman, and no doubt he did much to improve the breed of greyhounds. My own opinion is that before his time no very great amount of attention had been paid to pace, and that in consequence it was found that the hare was more than a match for any dog that ran by sight and not by scent. This may be mere conjecture on my part ; but I remember reading many years ago, in an old book which I have lost, and the name of which I have quite forgotten, that all sorts of endeavours were made in Yorkshire (the names of places in the North and East Riding were given) to improve the pace of the greyhound, so that he might be a match for the hare. Then Lord Orford's historian

tells us that, 'intent on obtaining as much perfection in the breed as possible, he introduced every experimental cross, from the English lurcher to the Italian greyhound. He it was that first thought of the cross with the English bulldog, in which he persevered in opposition to every opinion, until, after breeding on for seven removes, he found himself in possession of the best greyhounds ever known up to that time ; and he considered that this cross produced the small ear, the rat tail, the fine, thin, silky coat, together with that quiet, innate courage which the high-bred greyhound should possess—preferring death to relinquishing the chase.' The above remarks bear out my theory that when public coursing was first established good hares were more than a match for the average greyhound, and even in my experience I have seen fair public runners completely outpaced on many occasions.

However, Lord Orford set the example as regards breeding for pace. But it would seem that there is a limit even to the pace of a greyhound ; and proof thereof is to be found in the fact that if the weather is favourable to the hare—and it may be mentioned here that the hare suffers terribly in bad weather—the best of the species can set the best greyhounds at defiance, and run them to a standstill if the country be an open one, or escape to covert, provided there be

a covert within reasonable reach. Since Lord Orford's time breeding has been the careful study of many good coursers, and the keynote to the modern greyhound was supplied by King Cob, bred in 1839 by Captain Daintree, whose name figures times without number in the pedigrees of all the celebrities of recent years. I expect it would be almost impossible to find a good modern greyhound who has not some strain of King Cob in his veins ; and in certain cases, if the pedigree were extended out to eleven generations or so, it would be found that the name of the Norfolk celebrity appeared over fifty times. Whether King Cob and his contemporaries were as fast as their descendants of to-day is open to doubt ; but that they were equally handsome and as much at home behind a hare is pretty well certain, not only from the old pictures and prints in existence, but from the fact that at one time even greater law was allowed in the slip than has lately been the fashion.

The Ashdown Park Club, in Berkshire, founded in the year 1780 by the then Lord Craven, was the first rival which Swaffham had, though, as this was long before the railway era, it is quite certain that it drew upon an entirely different set of kennels. The Swaffham ground is mostly enclosed arable, with a little grass, and very level ; but at Ashdown the coursing

was (and is yet) all upon downs, and for more than a hundred years the ground has enjoyed an extraordinary reputation, the breed of hares being famous, and the 'going' so soft that greyhounds recover from the effects of a long course far more quickly than at many other places. Indeed, Ashdown has been the scene of some of the most important coursing matches ever held ; and notably, in 1860, the Ashdown Club challenged the world to run sixteen greyhounds in the Craven Cup against sixteen greyhounds, entered by members of the Club, which might be drawn from any source.

This match was won by the Club ; for though two representatives of each division were left in the fourth ties, both of the 'world' greyhounds went down, the deciding course being fought out by Mr. C. Randell's Rosy Morn and Lord Sefton's Sweetbriar (with victory to the former), both owners being members of the Ashdown Club, notwithstanding that Lord Sefton was emphatically a Lancashire courser, while Mr. Randell was a representative of the South of England.

If I go on with the history of the various clubs I shall soon have exhausted my space, so I must turn to other subjects, remarking before I take leave of Ashdown that slipping from horseback was customary there at the beginning of the century. Goodlake tells

us that 'the old gamekeeper, Sam Parker, never failed to show abundance of hares, and used to slip all the dogs himself on horseback. He carried a small white stick in the slipping hand, with which he checked the too great energy of a dog in slips, and always when the hare was started increased the speed of his horse, so as to get the greyhounds in a stride before he loosed them.' To modern ideas this seems to have been a very curious arrangement, for the even delivery of a pair of greyhounds most certainly entails the use of both hands, and therefore it is difficult to understand how the horse was guided and controlled.

Following closely upon the establishment of the Ashdown Club similar institutions sprang into existence at Malton, Louth, Ilsley in Derbyshire, Newmarket, Beacon Hill, Letcombe-Bowers, Morfe, Deptford Inn, Amesbury, Burton-on-Trent, and in the year 1825 at Altcar, near Liverpool, prior to which date several clubs had arisen in Scotland. It is possible, too, that many other clubs, of less prominence than those I have mentioned, enjoyed a brief span of life ; but when railways began to take the place of roads, coursing clubs in many places gave way to, or were crowded out by, open meetings, and one by one the old and once important coursing constitutions dropped out of existence. A notable exception was Altcar,

which rose steadily but surely, and before long began to be recognised as the premier club of the country. Membership was never easily obtainable, and the very highest standard was reached in a comparatively short time ; so much so, in fact, that Altcar very soon became what I may describe as the mother club of the coursing world, and this position it has maintained up to the present date.

And here I may remark that various codes of rules with regard to the course itself were adopted from time to time, the first of which were ‘amended from those framed by his Grace the Duke of Norfolk in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.’ Various clubs made various alterations in the Duke of Norfolk’s rules ; but in every code that ever was used the principle that the dog who did most towards killing the hare should be the winner was recognised. I have no space in which to show how the many slight changes have crept in, but herewith submit the code which has been in force all over the country since 1884, when the National Coursing Club (an outcome of the Altcar Club) put forth its constitution, bye-laws, and code of rules as follows :—

## THE NATIONAL COURSING CLUB

## CONSTITUTION AND BYE-LAWS

*As revised and adopted Feb. 19, 1884, with subsequent Alterations and Amendments to March 12, 1895.*

(a) The National Coursing Club shall be composed of members elected by the Coursing Clubs of the United Kingdom of more than one year's standing, having not less than twenty-four Members each, and of Members elected as hereinafter provided.

(b) No Coursing Club shall elect more than two representatives, the names and addresses of the representatives so elected to be sent to the Secretary of the National Coursing Club ; and should any club fail to hold a coursing meeting for two consecutive seasons, that club shall cease to send representative members.

(c) The National Coursing Club may elect as members of the Club (the number of Members so elected not to exceed twenty-five) any well-known supporters of public coursing who have been proposed and seconded by two members of the National Coursing Club at either of the club meetings held in London on the last Wednesday in June, or in Liverpool on the day of entry for the Waterloo Cup.<sup>1</sup> Members are elected by the National Coursing Club for five years, and are eligible for re-election. A month's notice must be given to the Secretary of the names of candidates for election to the National Coursing Club, with their addresses, and the names of their proposers and seconders, before they can come up for ballot. The election shall be by ballot, in which one black ball

<sup>1</sup> See Bye-law (j).

in seven shall exclude. If a quorum of Members be not present, then the election shall stand over till the next meeting of the National Coursing Club. The Secretary shall insert in the notice of business to be transacted at the meetings of the National Coursing Club the name of any candidate for election, with his address, and the names of his proposer and seconder.

(d) The National Coursing Club shall annually, on the day of entry for the Waterloo Cup, elect two of its Members as President and Secretary. At all its meetings seven shall be the quorum.

(e) Coursing Clubs desirous of joining the National Coursing Club must send evidence of their qualification to the Secretary. All Clubs having joined the National Coursing Club must subscribe 2*l.* annually, and all Members elected by the National Coursing Club 1*l.* annually, to the funds of the National Coursing Club, payable on January 1 of each year to the Secretary of the National Coursing Club. No representatives of any Club which has not paid its subscription, and no Members elected by the National Coursing Club who have not paid their subscriptions, on or before the day of entry for the Waterloo Cup, shall be allowed to attend the Meeting of the National Coursing Club on that day. All Clubs, with their representatives, and all Members of the National Coursing Club, whose subscriptions have not been paid on or before the last Wednesday in June of each year, shall cease to belong to the National Coursing Club. At the Summer Meeting, in each year, a statement of income and expenditure shall be submitted by the Secretary.

(f) Every Coursing Meeting shall, unless the contrary be declared by the programme of an Open Meeting or by Club Rules, be subject to all the Rules and Regula-

tions of the National Coursing Club. Every question or matter in dispute connected with coursing can be brought before the National Coursing Club for its decision.

(g) The National Coursing Club may, if it thinks fit, refer the examination of any case brought before the Club to a Committee consisting of not less than three members. Every such Committee shall make a written report to the Secretary, to be laid before the National Coursing Club for its approval.

(h) Every decision of the National Coursing Club shall be final, and the National Coursing Club may order that the expenses attending any case or matter in dispute brought before it shall be borne by the parties interested as the National Coursing Club may direct.

(i) The Secretary shall place on record in the minutes of the business of the National Coursing Club, and shall send to the Keeper of the Stud Book, and make public every case brought before the National Coursing Club, with the decision arrived at.

(j) Meetings for the despatch of business shall be held in London on the last Wednesday in June and first Wednesday in December, and in Liverpool on the day of the draw of the Altcar Club Meeting in November, and on the day of entry for the Waterloo Cup. The revision and alteration of rules can only be made, and the election of Members can only take place, at the Summer Meeting in London and at the Meeting in Liverpool on the day of entry for the Waterloo Cup. The Secretary, upon a requisition addressed to him in writing by any Three Stewards of a Meeting held under the National Coursing Club Rules, or by Six Public Coursers, Members of an established Coursing Club, may call a Special Meeting of

the National Coursing Club at such time and place as the President may appoint.

(k) All cases arising in Ireland or Scotland shall be heard by the National Coursing Club at its meeting in Liverpool.

(l) A month's notice must be given to the Secretary of any business or proposed alteration of Rules before it can be discussed at an Ordinary Meeting of the National Coursing Club; and at a Special Meeting nothing but the special business for which the meeting was called can be brought before it.

(m) The Secretary of the National Coursing Club shall be allowed, subject to approval by the National Coursing Club at the Summer Meeting, all expenses incurred by him in connection with the National Club during the preceding year.

#### CODE OF RULES

*As Revised and Adopted June 26, 1895.*

1. *The Secretary and Stewards.*—For any proposed Open Meeting a Committee of not less than three shall be formed, who, with the Secretary, shall settle preliminaries. The management of the Meeting shall be entrusted to this Committee, in conjunction with Stewards, who shall be elected by the subscribers present at the first evening of meeting. The Secretary, if honorary, shall be a member of the Committee and a Steward *ex officio*. The Stewards alone shall decide any disputed question by a majority of those present, subject to an appeal to the National Coursing Club. No Steward shall have a right to vote in any case relating to his own dogs. The Secretary shall declare, on or before the evening pre-

ceding the last day's running, how the prizes are to be divided ; and shall give a statement of expenses, if called upon to do so by any six of the subscribers, within fourteen days after the meeting.

2. *Ex-Officio Stewards*.—Members of the National Coursing Club present at any Coursing Meeting shall be *ex-officio* Stewards of such Meeting, together with the Stewards elected by the subscribers present on the first evening of the meeting, provided always that such Stewards *ex-officio* shall not exceed three. The Members of the National Coursing Club, being *ex-officio* Stewards at any Meeting, shall have power to deal summarily with all cases of a fraudulent or discreditable character brought before them during the Meeting, and their decision shall be final, unless an application in writing be lodged with the Secretary within twenty-four hours demanding a re-hearing at the first Meeting thereafter of the National Coursing Club, either in London or Liverpool, as the appellant may decide, and lodging in the hands of the Secretary the sum of 10*l.*, which shall be forfeited if the case is not submitted to such meeting of the National Coursing Club for re-hearing, and also may be forfeited if, on the re-hearing, the National Coursing Club shall so decide. Members of the National Coursing Club may be elected by the subscribers as Stewards of a Meeting.

3. *Election of Judge*.—The Judge may either be appointed by the Secretary and Committee acting under Rule 1, in which case his name shall be announced simultaneously with the Meeting, or elected by the votes of the subscribers taking nominations ; but each subscriber shall have only one vote, whatever the number of his nominations. Not less than ten days' notice of

the day of election shall be given to the subscribers, and the appointment shall be published at least a fortnight before the Meeting. The names of the subscribers voting, with the votes given by them, shall be recorded in a book open to the inspection of the Stewards, who shall declare the number of votes for each Judge, if called upon to do so by any of the subscribers. When a Judge is prevented from attending or finishing a Meeting, the Committee and the Stewards (if appointed) shall have the power of deciding what is to be done.

4. *Description of Entry.*—Every subscriber to a stake must name his dog before the time fixed for closing the entry, giving the names (the running names, if they had any) of the sire and dam of the dog entered. The Secretary shall publish on the cards the names of those who are subscribers, but do not comply with these conditions. These nominations shall not be drawn, but must be paid for. For Produce Stakes the names, pedigrees, ages, colours, and distinguishing marks of puppies shall be detailed in writing to the Secretary of a Meeting at the time of the original entry in all Puppy Stakes, and a subscriber must, if required, state in writing to the Secretary, before or during the Meeting for which such entry is made, the names and addresses of the parties who reared his puppies; and any puppy whose marks and pedigree shall be proved not to correspond with the entry given shall be disqualified, and the whole of its stakes or winnings forfeited. No greyhound is to be considered a puppy which was whelped before the first of January of the year preceding the commencement of the season of running. A sapling is a greyhound whelped on or after the first of January of the year in which the season of running commenced.

5. *Registration*.—Every litter of puppies shall, within two months of the date of whelping, be registered free of charge, with the names of the sire and dam, and the sex and number of the puppies, under a penalty of 1*l*. A fee of five shillings shall also be paid for the registration at the time of naming of each puppy not registered according to the above requirements. The colours, sex, names, pedigrees, and ages of all greyhounds, with the names of their owners and the owners of their sires and dams, must be registered in the Stud Book. The registration fee shall be one shilling and sixpence for each dog registered on or before the 1st of July, and an additional fee of one shilling shall be charged for the registration of all greyhounds (other than saplings) after that date to the end of the coursing season immediately following. Any owner by payment of thirty shillings annually may compound for the registration of any number of greyhounds *bonâ fide* his own property. No greyhound shall be registered whose sire and dam have not been registered ; provided always that such sire and dam may be registered at the same time on payment of a fee of 10*s*. for each dog. Every change of ownership must be registered at a fee of one shilling. A Certificate of Registration must be given on payment of the fee.

6. *Stud Book*.—The Greyhound Stud Book shall be published, under the authority of the National Coursing Club, on the 1st day of September, or as soon after as possible.

7. *Time for Registration*.—The registration of greyhounds shall be made on or before the 1st day of July and registrations made after that date, if they do not appear in the Stud Book of that year, will appear in that of the following year.

8. *Names.*—If the same name has been given to more than one greyhound, the Keeper of the Stud Book shall give priority to the dog first registered, and shall add to every other such name, except the one first registered, a numeral, commencing with II. Names once used will not be again available until after a lapse of ten years.

9. *Greyhounds not Registered are Disqualified.*—All greyhounds whose names do not appear in the Stud Book, or whose owners cannot produce a certificate of registration from the Keeper of the Stud Book, on being required to do so by a Steward, or the Secretary of any Coursing Meeting, shall be disqualified, and shall forfeit all entry money which may have been paid, and any stake or prize, or share of any stake or prize, won at such Meeting, and such entry money, stake, or prize, or share thereof, won by any dog so disqualified, shall be disposed of as provided by Rule 38 applicable to disqualification.

10. *Payment of Entry Money.*—All moneys due for nominations taken must be paid at or before the time fixed for closing the entry, whether the stakes fill or not, and although, from insufficient description or any other cause, the dogs named may be disqualified. No entry shall be valid unless the amount due for it has been paid in full. For all Produce and other Stakes, where a forfeit is payable, no declaration is necessary; the non-payment of the remainder of the entry money at the time fixed for that purpose is to be considered a declaration of forfeit. The Secretary is to be responsible for the entry money of all dogs whose names appear upon the card.

11. *Alteration of Name.*—If any subscriber should enter a greyhound by a different name from that in which it shall have last been entered to run in public, or

shall have been registered in the Stud Book, he shall give notice of the alteration to the Secretary at the time of entry, and the Secretary shall place on the card both the late and the present names of the dog, and this must be done at all Meetings at which the dog runs throughout the coursing season in which the alteration has been made. If notice of the alteration be not given, the dog shall be disqualified. The new name must be registered before the dog can run under it.

12. *Prefix of 'Ns.'*—Any subscriber taking an entry in a stake must prove to the satisfaction of the Stewards, if called upon by them to do so, that any greyhound entered by him without the prefix of the word 'Names' is *bonâ fide* his own property. If a subscriber enters a dog not his own property without putting 'Ns' after his own name, the dog so entered shall be disqualified. Every subscriber shall, if requested, deliver in writing to the Secretary of the Meeting the name of the *bonâ fide* owner of the greyhound named by him, and this communication is to be produced should any dispute arise. No dog purchased or procured for a less time than the entire period still remaining of its public running, or belonging to two or more persons, unless they are declared confederates, shall be held as *bonâ fide* the property of a subscriber. The names of confederates must be registered with the Keeper of the Stud Book—fee, one shilling for each name. Assumed names must also be registered with the Keeper of the Stud Book—fee, five guineas.

13. *Death of a Subscriber.*—The death of a subscriber shall only affect his nominations if it occur before the draw, in which case, subject to the exceptions stated below, they shall be void, whether the entries have been

made or not, and any money received for forfeits or stakes shall be returned, less the proportion of expenses when the amount has been advertised, and when the nominations rendered vacant are not filled by other subscribers. If he has parted with all interest in the nominations, and dogs not his property are entered and paid for, such entries shall not subsequently be disturbed. When dogs that have been entered in Produce Stakes change owners, with their engagements and with their forfeits paid, the then owner, if entitled to run them in those stakes, shall not be prevented from doing so by reason of the death of the former owner.

14. *Draw*.—Immediately before the greyhounds are drawn at any Meeting, and before nine o'clock on every subsequent evening during the continuance of such Meeting, the time and place of putting the first brace of dogs into the slips on the following morning shall be declared. A card or counter bearing a corresponding number shall be assigned to each entry. These numbered cards or counters shall then be placed together, and drawn indiscriminately. This classification, once made, shall not be disturbed throughout the Meeting, except for the purpose of guarding, or on account of byes.

15. *Guarding*.—When two or more nominations in a stake are taken in one name, the greyhounds, if *bonâ fide* the property of the same owner, shall be guarded throughout. This is always to be arranged, as far as possible, by bringing up dogs from below to meet those which are to be guarded. This guarding is not, however, to deprive any dog of a natural bye to which he may be entitled, either in the draw or in running through the stake. Dogs whose position has been altered in consequence of guarding or of byes must return to their

original position in the next round, if guarding does not prevent it.

16. *Byes*.—A natural bye shall be given to the lowest available dog in each round. No dog shall run a second such bye in any stake, unless it is unavoidable. When a dog is entitled to a bye, either natural or accidental, his owner or nominator may run any greyhound he pleases to assist in the course, provided always that in Sapling Stakes only a sapling may be used, and in Puppy Stakes none older than a puppy. But if it is proved to the satisfaction of the Stewards that no sapling or puppy respectively can be found to run an accidental bye, an older dog may be used. No dog shall run any bye earlier than his position on the card entitles him to do. The slip and the course in a bye shall be the same as in a course in which a decision is required, and the Judge shall decide whether enough has been done to constitute a course, or whether it must be run again, and in the latter case the Judge shall give the order. If at the commencement of any round in a stake one dog in each course of that round has a bye, those byes shall not be run, but the dogs shall take their places for the next round as if the byes had been run. A bye must be run before a dog can claim the advantage of it. Byes, or participation in winnings through being entitled to byes, shall count as courses won.

17. *Slip Stewara*.—The Committee of an Open Meeting and the members of a Club Meeting shall appoint, on the first evening of a Meeting, a Slip Steward, whose duty shall be to see that the right greyhounds, both in courses and byes, are brought to slips in their proper turn; to report to the Stewards, without delay, any greyhound that does not come to the slips in time, and any

act on the part of the slipper, nominators, or their representatives, which he may consider should be brought to their knowledge. If a nominator or his representative should refuse to comply with the directions of the Slip Steward, or should use abusive or insulting or threatening language towards him, the *ex-officio* Stewards of the National Coursing Club may inflict a penalty not exceeding 10*l.* on the person so offending, and disqualify such person or persons from running greyhounds at all Coursing Meetings held under the National Club Rules for such time as they may decide. A Slip Steward cannot be both Slip Steward and Flag Steward at any Coursing Meeting.

18. *Postponement of Meeting.*—A Meeting appointed to take place on a certain day may, if a majority of the Committee and the Stewards (if appointed) consider the weather unfit for coursing, be postponed from day to day; but if the running does not commence within the current week all nominations shall be void, unless it shall be especially stated otherwise in the conditions of the Meeting or in the conditions of a special stake or prize at such Meeting, and the expenses shall be paid by the subscribers, in proportion to the value of nominations taken by each. In the case of Produce Stakes, however, the original entries shall continue binding if the Meeting is held at a later period of the season.

19. *Taking Dogs to the Slips.*—Every dog must be brought to the slips in its proper turn, without delay, under a penalty of 1*l.* If absent for more than ten minutes (according to the report of the Slip Steward or of one of the Stewards), its opponent shall be entitled to claim the course, subject to the discretion of the Stewards, and shall in that case run a bye. If both dogs be absent at the

expiration of ten minutes, the Stewards shall have power to disqualify both dogs, or to fine their owners any sum not exceeding 5*l.* each. The nominator is answerable for his dog being put into the slips at the right time, on the right side, and against the right dog. No allowance shall be made for mistakes. No dog shall be put into the slips for a deciding course until thirty minutes after its course in the previous round without the consent of its owner. (See Rule 32).

20. *Control of Dogs in Slips.*—The control of all matters connected with slipping the greyhounds shall rest with the Stewards of a Meeting. Owners or servants, after delivering their dogs into the hands of the Slipper, may follow close after them, but not so as to inconvenience the Slipper, or in any way interfere with the dogs, under a penalty of 1*l.* Neither must they holloa them on while running, under the same penalty. Any greyhound found to be beyond control in slips may, by order of the Stewards, be taken out of the slips and disqualified.

21. *Greyhounds of Same Colour to Wear Collars.*—When two greyhounds drawn together are of the same colour, they shall each wear a collar, and the owners shall be subject to a penalty of 10*s.* for non-observance of this rule. The colour of the collar shall be red for the left-hand side and white for the right hand side of the slips. The upper dog on the card must be placed on the left hand, and the lower dog on the right hand of the slips.

22. *The Slip.*—The order to slip may be given by the Judge, or the Slip Steward, or the Stewards of a Meeting may leave the slip to the sole discretion of the Slipper. The length of slip must necessarily vary with the nature of the ground, but should never be less than

from three to four score yards, and must be maintained of one uniform length, as far as possible, throughout each stake.

23. *The Slipper*.—If one greyhound gets out of the slips the Slipper shall not let the other go. In any case of slips breaking, and either or both dogs getting away in consequence, the Slipper may be fined a sum not exceeding 1*l.*, at the discretion of the Stewards.

24. *Decision of the Judge*.—The Judge shall be subject to the general rules which may be established by the National Coursing Club for his guidance. He shall, on the termination of each course, immediately deliver his decision aloud, and shall not recall or reverse his decision, on any pretext whatever, after it has been declared ; but no decision shall be delivered until the Judge is perfectly satisfied that the course is absolutely terminated.

25. *Principles of Judging*.—The Judge shall decide all courses upon the one uniform principle that the greyhound which does most towards killing the hare during the continuance of the course is to be declared the winner. The principle is to be carried out by estimating the value of the work done by each greyhound, as seen by the Judge, upon a balance of points according to the scale hereafter laid down, from which also are to be deducted certain specified allowances and penalties.

26. The points of the course are—

- a. *Speed*—which shall be estimated as one, two, or three points, according to the degree of superiority shown. [See definition below (a).]
- b. *The Go-bye*.—Two points, or if gained on the outer circle, three points.

- c. The Turn.*—One point.
- d. The Wrench.*—Half a point.
- e. The Kill.*—Two points, or, in a descending scale, in proportion to the degree of merit displayed in that kill, which may be of no value.
- f. The Trip.*—One point.

#### DEFINITION OF POINTS

- a.* In estimating the value of speed to the hare the Judge must take into account the several forms in which it may be displayed, viz. :—
  - 1. Where in the run up a clear lead is gained by one of the dogs, in which case one, two, or three points may be given, according to the length of lead, apart from the score for a turn or wrench. In awarding these points the Judge shall take into consideration the merit of a lead obtained by a dog which has lost ground at the start, either from being unsighted or from a bad slip, or which has had to run the outer circle.
  - 2. Where one greyhound leads the other so long as the hare runs straight, but loses the lead from her bending round decidedly in favour of the slower dog of her own accord, in which case the one greyhound shall score one point for the speed shown, and the other dog score one point for the first turn.
  - 3. Under no circumstances is speed without subsequent work to be allowed to decide a course, except where great superiority is

shown by one greyhound over another in a long lead to covert.

If a dog, after gaining the first six points, still keeps possession of the hare by superior speed, he shall have double the prescribed allowance for the subsequent points made before his opponent begins to score.

- b. The Go-bye* is where a greyhound starts a clear length behind his opponent, and yet passes him in a straight run, and gets a clear length before him.
- c. The Turn* is where the hare is brought round at not less than a right angle from her previous line
- d. The Wrench* is where the hare is bent from her line at less than a right angle ; but where she only leaves her line to suit herself, and not from the greyhound pressing her, nothing is to be allowed.
- e. The Merit of a Kill* must be estimated according to whether a greyhound, by his own superior dash and skill, bears the hare ; whether he picks her up through any little accidental circumstances favouring him, or whether she is turned into his mouth, as it were, by the other greyhound.
- f. The Trip*, or unsuccessful effort to kill, is where the hare is thrown off her legs, or where a greyhound flecks her, but cannot hold her.

27. The following allowances shall be made for accidents to a greyhound during a course ; but in every case they shall only be deducted from the other dog's score :—

- a.* For losing ground at the start, either from

being unsighted, or from a bad slip, in which case the Judge is to decide what amount of allowance is to be made, on the principle that the score of the foremost dog is not to begin until the second has had an opportunity of joining in the course, and the Judge may decide the course or declare the course to be an undecided or no course, as he may think fit.

- b.* Where a hare bears very decidedly in favour of one of the greyhounds, after the first or subsequent turns, in which case the next point shall not be scored by the dog unduly favoured, or only half his points allowed, according to circumstances. No greyhound shall receive any allowance for a fall or an accident, with the exception of being ridden over by the owner of the competing greyhound or his servant, provided for by Rule 31, or when pressing his hare, in which case his opponent shall not count the next point made.

28. *Penalties :—*

- a.* Where a greyhound, from his own defect, refuses to follow the hare at which he is slipped, he shall lose the course.
- b.* Where a dog wilfully stands still in a course, or departs from directly pursuing the hare, no points subsequently made by him shall be scored ; and if the points made by him up to that time be just equal to those made by his antagonist in the whole course, he shall thereby lose the course ; but where one or

both dogs stop with the hare in view, through inability to continue the course, it shall be decided according to the number of points gained by each dog during the whole course.

- c. If a dog refuses to fence where the other fences, any points subsequently made by him are not to be scored ; but if he does his best to fence, and is foiled by sticking in a meuse, the course shall end there. When the points are equal, the superior fencer shall win the course.

29. *Second Hare*.—If a second hare be started during a course, and one of the dogs follow her, the course shall end there.

30. *Greyhound getting Loose*.—Any person allowing a greyhound to get loose and join in a course which is being run shall be fined 1*l*. If the loose greyhound belong to either of the owners of the dogs engaged in the particular course, such owner shall forfeit his chance of the stake with the dog then running, unless he can prove to the satisfaction of the Stewards that he had not been able to get the loose greyhound taken up after running its own course. The course is not to be considered as necessarily ended when a third dog joins in.

31. *Riding Over a Greyhound*.—If any subscriber or his servant shall ride over his opponent's greyhound while running a course, the owner of the dog so ridden over shall (although the course be given against him) be deemed the winner of it, or shall have the option of allowing the other dog to remain and run out the stake, and, in such case, shall be entitled to half its winnings.

32. *No Course*.—A 'no course' is when, by accident or by the shortness of the course, the dogs are not tried

together ; and, if one be then drawn, the other must run a bye, unless the Judge, on being appealed to, shall decide that he has done enough work to be exempted from it. An undecided course is where the Judge considers the merits of the dogs equal, and, if either is then drawn, the other cannot be required to run a bye ; but the owners must at the time declare which dog remains in. (See Rule 34.) The Judge shall signify the distinction between a 'no course' and an 'undecided' by taking off his hat in the latter case only. After an undecided or no course, if the dogs, before being, aken up, get on another or the same hare, the Judge must follow, and shall decide in favour of one if he considers that there has been a sufficient trial to justify his doing so. A 'no course' or an 'undecided' may be run off immediately, if claimed on behalf of both dogs before the next brace are put into the slips, or, in case of 'no course,' if so ordered by the Judge, otherwise it shall be run 'again' after the two next courses, unless it stand over till the next morning, when it shall be the first course run ; if it is the last course of the day, fifteen minutes shall be allowed after both dogs are taken up.

33. *Explanation by Judge.*—The Judge shall render an explanation of any decision only to the Stewards of the Meeting if required, through them, before the third succeeding course, by the owner, or nominator, or representative of the owner or nominator, of either of the greyhounds engaged in the course. The Stewards shall, if requested to do so, express their opinion whether the explanation is satisfactory or not, and their opinion in writing may be asked for and published afterwards ; but the decision of the Judge, once given, shall not be reversed for any cause.

34. *Withdrawal of a Dog.*—If a dog be withdrawn from any stake on the field, its owner, or someone having his authority, must at once give notice to the Secretary or Flag or Slip Steward. If the dog belongs to either of these officials, the notice must be given to the other. When, after a no course or an undecided, one of the greyhounds has been officially drawn, and the dogs are again, by mistake, put into the slips and run a course, the arrangements come to shall stand, whatever the Judge's decision may be, and all bets on the course shall be void.

35. *Impugning Judge.*—If any subscriber, owner, or any other person, proved to be interested, openly impugns the decision of the Judge on the ground, except by a complaint to the Stewards according to Rule 33, he shall forfeit not more than 5*l.*, nor less than 2*l.*, at the discretion of the Stewards.

36. *Stakes not Run Out.*—When two greyhounds remain in for the deciding course, the stakes shall be considered divided if they belong to the same owner, or to confederates, and also if the owner of one of the two dogs induces the owner of the other to draw him for any payment or consideration ; but if one of the two be drawn without payment or consideration, from lameness or from any cause clearly affecting his chance of winning, the other may be declared the winner, the facts of the case being clearly proved to the satisfaction of the Stewards. The same rule shall apply when more than two dogs remain in at the end of a stake which is not run out ; and in case of a division between three or more dogs, of which two or more belong to the same owner, these latter shall be held to take equal shares of the total amount received by their owner in a division. When there is a compulsory division, all greyhounds remaining

in the class that is being run, even where one is entitled to a bye, shall take equal shares. The terms of any arrangement to divide winnings, and the amount of any money given to induce the owner of a dog to draw him, must be declared to the Secretary.

37. *Winners of Stakes Running Together*.—If two or more greyhounds shall each win a stake, and have to run together for a final prize or challenge cup, should they not have run an equal number of ties in their respective stakes, the greyhound which has run the smaller number of courses must run a bye, or byes, to put itself upon an equality in this respect with its opponent,

38. *Objections*.—An objection to a greyhound may be made to any one of the Stewards of a Meeting at any time before the stakes are paid over, upon the objector lodging in the hands of such Steward or the Secretary the sum of 5*l.*, which shall be forfeited if the objection proves frivolous, or if he shall not bring the case before the next meeting of the National Coursing Club, or give notice to the Stewards previous thereto of his intention to withdraw the objection. The owner of the greyhound objected to must deposit equally the sum of 5*l.*, and prove the correctness of his entry. Expenses in consequence of an objection shall be borne as the National Coursing Club may direct. Should an objection be made which cannot at the time be substantiated or disproved, the greyhound may be allowed to run under protest, the Stewards retaining the winnings until the objection has been withdrawn, or heard and decided. If the greyhound objected to be disqualified, the amount to which he would otherwise have been entitled shall be divided equally among the dogs beaten by him ; and if a piece of plate or prize has been added, and won by him, only the dogs

which he beat in the several rounds shall have a right to contend for it.

39. *Defaulters*.—No person shall be allowed to enter or run a greyhound, in his own or any other person's name, who is a defaulter for either stakes, forfeits, or bets, or for money due under an arrangement for a division of winnings, or for penalties regularly imposed for the infraction of rules by the Stewards of any Meeting, or for any payment required by a decision of the National Coursing Club, or for subscriptions due to any Club entitled to have representatives in the National Coursing Club. As regards bets, however, this rule shall only apply when a complaint is lodged with the Secretary of the National Coursing Club within six months after the bet becomes due. On receipt of such complaint the Secretary shall give notice of the claim to the person against whom it is made, with a copy of this rule, and if he should not pay the bet, or appear before the next meeting of the National Coursing Club and resist the claim successfully, he shall be considered a defaulter.

40. *Judge or Slipper Interested*.—If a Judge or Slipper be in any way interested in the winnings of a greyhound or greyhounds, the owner and nominator in each case, unless they can prove satisfactorily that such interest was without their cognizance, shall forfeit all claim to the winnings, and the dog shall be disqualified; and if any nominator or owner of greyhounds shall give, offer, or lend money, or anything of value, to any Judge or Slipper, such owner or nominator shall not be allowed to run dogs in his own or any other person's name during any subsequent period that the National Coursing Club may decide upon.

41. *Discreditable Conduct*.—Any person who is proved,

to the satisfaction of the National Coursing Club, to have been guilty of any fraudulent or discreditable conduct in connection with coursing or any other recognised sport, may, in addition to any pecuniary penalty to which he may be liable, be declared incapable of running or entering a greyhound in his own or any other person's name during any subsequent period that the National Coursing Club may decide upon ; and any dogs under his care, training, management, or superintendence, shall be disqualified during such subsequent period.

42. *Bets*.—All bets upon an undecided course shall stand, unless one of the greyhounds be drawn. All bets upon a dog running further than another in the stake shall be p.p., whatever accident may happen. Bets upon a deciding, as upon every other course, are off if the course is not run. Long odds bets shall be void when made after the draw unless the greyhound the bet refers to shall run one course in the stake, other than a bye, after the bet is made. In the case of a Meeting, or of a Coursing Prize, where the nominations are not void in consequence of postponement, all long odds bets made before the first draw shall hold good, but long odds bets made after any draw, except the draw under which the stake is run, shall be void.

43. *Bets or Stakes Divided*.—Where money has been laid against a dog winning a stake, and he divides it, the two sums must be put together and divided in the same proportion as the value of the stakes.

I now proceed to make a few remarks on the various *public* coursing grounds of the kingdom, places where the sport is still pursued, in spite of the wholesale extinction of hares, and where the aspiring courser

can take his choice of ground and witness the sport in the high state of perfection to which it has been brought, thanks chiefly to the firm action of the Altcar Club in the middle of the century.

Time was, and not so long ago, that public coursing was pursued in every corner of the kingdom when the ground was suitable ; now, of course, matters are quite different. In the South of England big and important meetings have ceased to exist, except at Newmarket and in Essex (where, if the stakes are somewhat unimportant, there is nevertheless a capital supply of greyhounds). All those magnificent down lands in Berkshire, Wiltshire, and Dorsetshire, furnish possibly one course for every score that used to be run less than a quarter of a century ago. At Ashdown, Amesbury, and a few other places in the same district, where the conditions were once simply perfect, occasional small and very unimportant meetings are held ; but the fact is that the disappearance of the hares has caused the greyhounds to disappear in like manner, and dozens of country-people gave up breeding in disgust when they found that trials were almost an impossibility, that the meetings were few and far between, and that in order to win a good stake they had to take their greyhounds a couple of hundred miles or so by train.

In the Midlands things are a little better, with good meetings still held at Lichfield, Sleaford, Wapenbury, and elsewhere ; in Essex, too, there has recently been something like a revival, the meetings being numerous and well arranged, and in many places first-rate coursing ground is placed at the service of the three or four clubs which are in existence. If things have improved in Essex, it is, however, just the reverse with Kent, and probably the many coursers who used to foregather on the Cliffe Marshes not more than five or six years ago, now utilise the north side of the Thames as their running ground. It is hardly my business to inquire why this change has come about ; but I may mention that the original Secretary of the Cliffe Club migrated to Essex some five years ago, and that as soon as he was settled in his new quarters he set about establishing the 'Eastern Counties Club,' which has its headquarters at Witham, and is now the only *enclosed* coursing meeting in the kingdom.

Here I must interpolate a few remarks about enclosed coursing, which for at least a decade was all the rage with the gambling school of coursers, but was really a poor form of sport when compared with the legitimate business. Not that I for a moment am going to suggest that it savoured of cruelty,

and, as a matter of fact, the percentage of kills was as a rule much smaller at the enclosures than in the open ; but there were many weak points about the game—speed was unduly served ; welching, waiting, or lurching tactics were encouraged in any greyhound who had a soft spot in his composition ; and, worst of all, betting increased tenfold, and the meetings therefore attracted scores of men who knew nothing about coursing, and cared nothing, but who went to the enclosures solely with a view to winning money, their presence being in direct opposition to the best interests of the sport.

The field chosen for an enclosure was large and roomy, and such long slips were given that puss always had a fair chance. At the farthest end of the ground there was a line of escapes, and this caused the small mortality in hares to which I referred just now. It happened, too, if hares were put down two or three weeks before they were wanted, and well fed with hard meat, that they were invariably able to show their full powers, and then—unless bad management intervened—it was quite as fair, in many ways, as open coursing. Its chief drawback lay in the fact that the hares, knowing where the escapes were, in nineteen cases out of twenty worked forward, and thus, if one dog could command his opponent for speed,

he times without number won on speed alone, without his working powers being brought into play.

Then, again, there was a great monotony about the courses—no fences, no ditches, and very seldom any variety ; long, very long slips were the rule, and it was quite the exception when a hare and a brace of dogs worked back into the centre of the field, after having gone some distance up the enclosure. The old coursers got sick of these continuous driving chases, for they were more chases than courses. Coursing from a grand stand, too, with luncheon in a Club dining room, after a while began to pall, and the enthusiasts gladly reverted to the open, the ten or twenty mile tramp, and all the invariable variety of sport which country coursing entails.

It was freely stated at the time that betting killed enclosed coursing, and doubtless the wagering was a very big nail in its coffin ; but, none the less, genuine coursers utterly wearied of its monotony, and when they began to desert the ship it was left in the hands of a crew of ignorant men, who knew nothing of the real business of coursing, and had only rushed into it because of the chances of making money. The ship quickly foundered ; and I must add that, though the Eastern Counties Club have an enclosed ground, their *modus operandi* is very different from

that which was in force at Kempton, Gosforth, and Haydock a few years ago. They have a fairly rough field, very short slips, and the hares are so carefully looked after, and kept in such grand condition, that they invariably run well. In fact, the Witham ground is a grand place to give young dogs practice, and, as no monster stakes are run to attract men who only want to bet, there is little difference between the Witham Meeting and the open ones, except that at the former place the coursing all takes place in one spot.

I mentioned just now that the enclosed meetings attracted a very non-sporting element, and, though it is a 'chestnut' of several years' standing, I may relate a little incident which occurred at Kempton over the first course one day, and which is absolutely true. A very big racing bookmaker, who had not seen coursing before, put in an appearance. The first brace of dogs were sent to slips, and the wagerer, having found out which was favourite (there was a 4 to 1 on chance running), instantly started operations by offering 5 to 2 against the non-favourite. This led to no result, so he then offered 5 to 4 against the other, and proceeded to book his wagers as fast as he could write them down. At length there was a lull in the proceedings, and someone asked

sarcastically how he hoped to win by laying against both dogs. 'What !' he replied. 'Do you take me for a fool? Hain't the bally 'are got a chance?'

And now to return to the coursing grounds. Gloucestershire still has a few country meetings; Warwickshire coursers (there are not many of them) can run at Wappenbury and at Lichfield, in the adjoining county; Salop is much better off, there being several meetings in the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury districts; but in Derbyshire and Notts the sport has practically departed, and really nine-tenths of the English greyhounds are now kept in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cumberland, Northumberland, and Durham. Lancashire is decidedly the headquarters of the sport, and with the Waterloo Cup, the Altcar and Ridgway Club Meetings, the Southport gatherings, and smaller affairs at Bickerstaffe, Burscough, Hale, Halewood, Little Marton, Rufford, and other places, it fairly keeps the game alive, and on the whole produces more good greyhounds than any other county, though Cumberland, Northumberland, and the North of Ireland have contributed their full share of great winners in modern times.

The plains on the southern and western seaboard of the County Palatine are eminently suited for coursing, but much of the ground is not sound

enough to carry a horse (there have been no hounds in this district since the Croxteth Harriers ceased to exist a score of years ago). It happens, therefore, that coursing has, during the whole of the present century, been *the* sport of this particular part of the kingdom, and as the supply of game is well maintained (thanks to Lord Sefton at Altcar, Mr. Clifton at Lytham, the Scarisbrick family at Southport, and other good preservers), the meetings show no decline, and membership of the Altcar and Ridgway Clubs is just as much coveted as ever it was. The ground seems peculiarly suitable for hares ; nevertheless, those in the Altcar district vary very much, according to the state of the weather, and I have seen them run no better than rabbits after a week or two of heavy rain. Should the ground be dry and the weather frosty they perform in very different fashion ; and on the whole they are good enough, though not of the same uniform excellence as their neighbours on the northern bank of the estuary of the Ribble, where the Ridgway meetings are held. In that favoured spot there are many sloping banks, which afford plenty of dry lying in wet weather ; and though most of the coursing takes place on flat, marshy land, the hares never show any signs of feeble vitality, and the breed in one part of the ground, which are known as ‘ Jock

o' Pods,' are possessed of extraordinary stamina. They have probably broken the hearts of more good greyhounds than any other breed of hares in the country.

All the same, I must write of what I have seen, and at no public coursing have I ever known hares to so completely beat their pursuers as at the two spots mentioned in the sketch of Private Coursing. At both places the breed was what is generally known in the North of England as 'Moor Edge' hares, and I have always judged that these particular specimens had to travel farther for their food during the night than their inland neighbours of the enclosures, a consequence being that they are kept in stronger work, and are naturally in harder condition. And, *à propos* of Moor Edge hares, those coursed at the Carmichael Meetings, near Lanark, on Sir Windham Anstruther's property, are a very hardy type, and marvellously strong runners. Some of them disappear over the skyline of the moor with the greyhounds behind them, nearly two miles from where the crowd is gathered; but, nevertheless, I was never struck with their extreme superiority, and I imagine there are as many kills at Carmichael as at many more southern meetings in the enclosed country.

At Southport much of the coursing is on ploughed land, and strength in a greyhound is generally better

served than speed. Activity, too, is necessary for a dog to win at Southport ; and in proof of the softness and depth of the going, I may state that the judge gives his decisions from the top of a ladder, the ground being too rotten to carry a horse.

Cumberland, I am sorry to say, is not what it once was in the matter of coursing. The Border Union Meeting, which takes place on the confines of Cumberland and Dumfriesshire, still holds its own, and is without question second only to the Waterloo Cup as a public coursing ; but Brougham and Brampton have long since disappeared, and the West Cumberland Club, which flourished only a few years ago, now makes no stir in the world, and may be defunct for all I know to the contrary. The Border Union ground is very good, the hares are excellent, and the Graham family, of Netherby, together with their tenants, are most assiduous preservers. The valuable stakes attract the best class of greyhounds, and as the meeting is held in mid-October, it rarely suffers from postponement, often escaping with only one wet day—a rather wonderful circumstance, seeing that the district is one of the rainiest spots in the kingdom.

Northumberland, which has recently sent out great winners in Fullerton, Miss Glendyne, Bit of Fashion, and the rest of that wonderful family de-

scended from Ptarmigan and Gallant Foe, has not so much public coursing as formerly, when Gosforth Park was at its zenith, or even before, when the monster Bothal and Coquetdale Meetings were in existence ; still there are plenty of greyhounds in the county, and the North of England Club works hard in the best interests of the sport. This institution is an extraordinary power in the land, and literally commands the country from Ripon, in Yorkshire, to Eslington, in North Northumberland, coursing over a dozen or more large estates in the intervening district of more than one hundred miles, and providing stakes for every class of greyhound. Its most numerous, but smaller, meetings are in the Durham district, and its biggest affair over the Marquess of Ripon's Rainton estate, near Ripon, where the programme embraces a sixty-four, two thirty-twos, and two or three sixteens. Most of the ground where it has leave is good ; but at some of the meetings the enclosures are small, and often a great part of each course is only visible to the judge.

Durham is a great coursing county, but nowadays the greyhounds are chiefly owned by small tradesmen, innkeepers, and miners ; and, in direct contrast to the state of affairs existing in Lancashire, the Durham Meetings seem to appeal chiefly to those who are

somewhat lowly placed in the social scale. Still, the spirit of sport is the same, and there never were such fellows as the Durham miners for preserving hares. In a coursing neighbourhood every miner is *ex officio* a gamekeeper, and not many years ago I saw thirteen courses from five acres of turnips in a field which adjoined a 'pit heap,' the summit of which was crowned with a crowd of men, women, and children, probably two thousand strong.

In Yorkshire, the North Riding and the northern part of the East Riding have plenty of coursing meetings. In the first-named locality the North of England Club rules the roast, but farther south the Yorkshire Club does duty, and seems to be a most flourishing institution. The best ground I ever coursed over in the county was the Seamer estate of Lord Londesborough, near Scarborough ; but Rainton is very good, too, and the beats are so managed that most of the running is over grass. There used to be important meetings at Market Weighton (very flinty wold country), but they have fallen off of late years, and I imagine that very little coursing now takes place in the East Riding.

Nor are the Scotch meetings what they were, as Carmichael alone puts forth a big programme nowadays. But in Ireland there seems to be little change ;

if one meeting disappears another takes its place, and there are as many Irish nominators in the Waterloo Cup as ever there used to be when coursing was more general than it is now.

In this very brief sketch of the sport I have been obliged to leave out many subjects connected with coursing on which I might have touched had I more space at my disposal. Thus, I have said nothing about the management and training of greyhounds, their breeding and pedigrees ; nor have I made mention of the famous dogs of the past, nor treated of the Waterloo Cup and other big stakes ; for it seemed to me that, with limited space at command, a slight description of private and public coursing as they have been and are—as far as is possible with the present scarcity of hares—would meet the views of my readers better than a *réchauffé* of dry historical facts or of details of the sport from a calendar point of view.

# HUNTING THE HARE



## BEAGLING

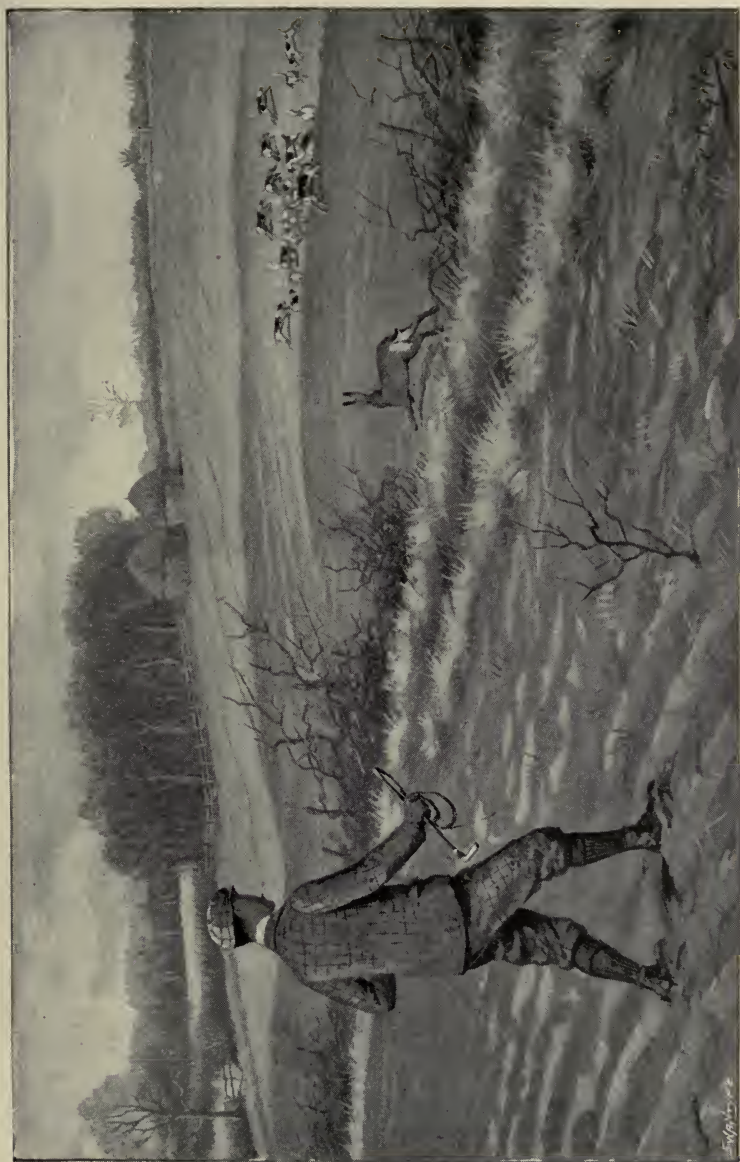
BY G. H. LONGMAN

THOUGH perhaps it may be too much to say that hunting the hare on foot with a pack of 15-in. beagles is the most interesting method of pursuing the animal, still, if the evenness of the chances is to be the criterion of interest, certainly the contest between a good pack of beagles and a strong hare—the odds being slightly in favour of the latter—presents sport in its truest elements.

A good pack of these little hounds will no doubt on a good scenting day account for any hare, barring accidents ; but these accidents are extremely numerous, the first and foremost being the rising up in the middle of the pack of a fresh hare just as the hunted animal is evidently sinking. This mishap occurs more frequently than any other, and is generally irremediable. Imagine a large ploughed field of stiff clay, the hunted hare down, and hounds just feathering on the line, scent having become a

little weak. The huntsman is nearest (and all praise to him, as hounds have run hard for forty minutes ! ) ; he has pulled up to a walk, for the clay land clings to each boot with a tenacity which renders even walking a wearisome struggle. He knows well that the moment is critical, as there are probably fresh hares lying in the field ; that scent may so far fail as to compel him to make a cast ; and that this will certainly increase the already imminent danger of a change. He is just stopping, in order to keep well away from his hounds, when he almost treads on a fresh hare which gets up under his feet. She heads straight for the pack, but our huntsman stands still as death ; puss, seeing hounds, swerves away without their catching a view, and the danger of a change is for the moment past. But our huntsman's eyes are at work, and he presently observes a dark form stealing away about a hundred yards in front of the pack. He looks again, makes sure that it is *his* hare, and then, blowing his horn, has his hounds to him in a trice, while he gamely struggles through the clay at the best pace he can muster towards the spot where the hunted hare has disappeared over a brow, her arched back betraying her distressed condition, so that if only hounds can get a view they must kill her.

The game is well-nigh won ; but unfortunately



'A CRITICAL MOMENT. THE HUNTSMAN STANDS STILL AS DEATH'



the hounds' heads are up, and, a fresh hare rising in their very midst, away goes the whole pack, running the stranger in view. Really well under control as they are, no amount of rating or horn-blowing will stop them unless someone can get round them. Get round them ! Alas, anyone who has run with beagles knows the impossibility of this until hounds check ! It is, moreover, quite likely that they will run without checking for at least twenty minutes, and then what prospect will there be of recovering the line of the hunted hare ? Some slight chance indeed there is, for a tired hare always stops, so that, if any vestige of a line can be shown, hounds may work up to and re-find her. Far oftener, however, all trace has vanished, when they are brought back to the spot where she was last seen.

But let us describe a day's sport with beagles, starting with the supposition that the master is sufficiently energetic to be up and at it by six o'clock on a beautiful October morning ; for not only are hares scarce in the district over which he proposes to hunt, the consequence being that he will have a better chance of a find by getting on the trail, but he also desires to give his young entry the lesson for which running a hare's trail up to her form is so admirably adapted.

There has been rain, but it passed away on the previous afternoon, and after a brilliant night the ground is covered with a heavy dew. Our huntsman is wise to begin operations thus early, for now scent is probably good ; whereas when the sun has reached any height the atmospheric conditions will, as a rule, become less favourable.

Let us linger for a moment by the gate, where hounds are clustered round their huntsman, some jumping up at him, and others making an unprofessional use of their tuneful voices, a transgression which, however, elicits but a faint-hearted rate, for our huntsman loves his hounds intensely, and feels almost inclined to encourage a breach of etiquette which only enhances his already keen sense of enjoyment.

It is a charming scene. A country roadside which forms the boundary between some rough grass meadows leading down to a stream on the one side, and a heather common on the other, gently undulating towards a piece of water, to which the wild duck are just coming in from the stream where they have spent the night. Even now a few duck are to be seen overhead, the whistle of their wings first making us aware of their presence. They are circling high above us, not daring to pitch, and will probably take

a fresh flight to another and larger sheet of water about three miles further on.

We must, however, return to the pack. The Master is moving off, and as he waves the pack over a bank into the heather any hound throwing his tongue will be severely dealt with if the whipper-in can only get near enough to administer one cut, accompanied by 'Ware riot, Melody !' for business has begun.

Ten couple of hounds there are in all, and two couple of them are unentered. Melody is one of these, and while there must be no question of sparing the rod, we have a fellow-feeling for her exuberance of spirits. The delinquent already has her stern up once more (it was momentarily lowered on receipt of the whipper-in's practical rebuke), and is as busy as any of them, flinging here and there, and pushing her way into a cluster of hounds which look remarkably busy, for, yes ! they have already struck a line, no doubt of a hare returning from feeding in the grass meadows adjoining the common.

The huntsman maintains a masterly inactivity, merely rating any hound which shows an inclination to dwell on the line. Now they are running quite merrily across the heather, but come to a stop where the hare has taken to one of the paths which abound

hereabouts. She has run the path for quite eighty yards, and only the older hounds can carry the line along it, the body of the pack casting about, and showing a slight inclination to run heel. The huntsman, however, holds them forward, walking quietly along the path, well in rear of those hounds who are carrying the line.

These tactics result in a pretty hit, for, although the hare has run the road for eighty yards, she has run her foil for at least twenty-five before flinging off, so that the body hit the line out of the path while the old hounds are still picking out the scent further along ; but these at once go to cry, and the whole pack flings briskly forward. The huntsman allows them very ample room, knowing that puss has very likely made her form not far away. See ! they have overrun the scent, and, as they spread back fan-like to recover the line, up jumps the hare and off they go, running in view for a short distance, and then taking up the line with a chorus which at once proclaims a scent.

The whipper-in is lying wide, and succeeds in turning the hare out of a broad sandy path which would otherwise undoubtedly have caused a check ; and away they go over the open heather at a pace which tries our wind terribly. The pack head straight for a sort of island farm which lies on a hill side in the

middle of the heather, cross it, and, emerging once more at the top of the hill, run beautifully over the heathery flat until they come to a main road, where they check long enough to enable the huntsman to get up to them.

A pretty picture is displayed ! A fine stretch of heather extending for some miles, through which the old main road from London to Portsmouth runs, with now and again considerable stretches of fir woods forming a dark fringe to the view, whilst over the fir tops the sun, just emerging, adds a sparkling brightness to the landscape, which would be alone sufficient to repay the early start. The busy pack makes a beautiful foreground, flinging here and there in search of the momentarily vanished clue. Mark that veteran of the pack, well known for his wide and independent casts ; the huntsman's eye is on him, and he moves quietly in his direction, without, however, so much as whistling to his hounds.

He has judged wisely, for Challenger unmistakably has the line and speaks to it confidently, just as the huntsman gets near enough to put in with good effect, 'Hark to Challenger !' and hounds, flying to cry, take up the running with a chorus which it does one's heart good to hear. They have, however, only run about a hundred yards when they check quite

suddenly, once more spreading out like a fan. But they are only momentarily at fault. Poor puss is down, her heart having failed her after coming about two miles straight, and she is up and off in view as soon as the hounds, who have slightly overrun the scent, spread back to where she has clapped. She heads for home, and hounds run fast for another fifteen minutes before checking on the island farm which they crossed in the first burst.

The sun is getting strong by this time, and scent does not serve so well on the arable land. Hounds slowly carry the line into the middle of a newly ploughed hillside field, and gradually come to a stop. Evidently the hare is forward, so, after leaving his hounds alone sufficiently long to enable them to recover the line, unassisted if they can, the huntsman resolves on a cast 'forrard.' He whistles his hounds to him, and at a gentle double casts them round the fence from about opposite to where they checked, keeping his hounds in front of him, and giving them time to try as they go. Almost immediately one of the puppies speaks, and out pops a rabbit right under his nose. The huntsman rates 'Ware rabbit !' and, very much to their credit, none of the old hounds break away. It is, however, altogether too much for

the puppies, who every one of them course the rabbit for about a hundred yards in full cry.

Luckily the interloper runs up hill along the fence, so the delinquents are easily stopped by the whipper-in, who is lying back, and turned to the master's horn. It may here be remarked that it is comparatively easy to stop beagles from rabbits in the open. The pack the writer has in mind would always stop if rated when a rabbit got up in an open field ; but in covert, where one could not easily get at them, the case was very different, and you might holloa yourself hoarse without producing much effect. Master Bunny, however, only caused a momentary diversion, and hounds, having struck the line in the bottom corner of the fence, are once more chiming away merrily over the heather in the direction of puss's original form.

Will they catch her? Well, if she is a leveret her bolt must be nearly shot, but if she is an old hare—and she is big enough!—she will lead the pack a merry dance for another good half-hour before giving in. So is the fight fought between poor puss and her enemies the beagles. Sometimes a circle ; sometimes a straight bolt and then as a rule clapping till hounds are over her, and getting up behind them, making her way home again ; sometimes, though not often, making a long point and dying some five miles

from home. I once recollect a hare being found close to the brook near which hounds were thrown off, as above described, making a point of five miles over the heather, and being eventually killed in the grounds of a well-known public school situated in that district. This is, however, an exceptional occurrence.

Many and varied are the incidents which occur during the chase of a hare. Often have we been hopelessly at fault on that common, when, to our joy, we have beheld a hat held aloft on some neighbouring hill. We know that hat well. It belongs to the most arrant poacher in the neighbourhood ; he is the best hand at seeing a hare sitting in the whole countryside, and he knows a hunted hare when he sees her. We tried at one time to reclaim him by paying him more for every hare he found for us than he could get for one dead in the public-house. No use ! the instinct was far too strong, and only a week or two after the beginning of the compact 'the Long 'un,' as he was called—for he was a tall fellow—was caught setting a snare one Sunday morning.

When we were drawing for a hare he would walk with his hands 'behind him, and, turning his head slowly from side to side, would cover all ground within fifty yards as well as any setter. Probably before very long he would suddenly stop, and, indicating a certain

spot perhaps twenty yards away, would quite quietly remark, 'There she sets!' Surely enough there she did sit ; though as often as not his eye alone could discern Madam Puss crouched in her heathery form. A wonderfully observant man he must have been, and great fun we used to have about him ; but as to reclaiming him, you might as well have asked him not to eat—or drink, for it must be regretfully admitted he was at least as fond of liquid as of solid nourishment.

He was often in gaol—always for poaching—and, as the keeper used to say, 'The Long 'un always came out fatter than he went in !' so his home fare was probably neither plentiful in quantity nor of an Epicurean quality. He never bore malice, as the following incident shows. He had been in gaol for poaching on the common above described. His sentence expired on a Saturday, and as a party of us were walking on the following Sunday afternoon along one of the footpaths which thread the common, who should appear round a corner but our friend, just fresh from gaol.

What did he do? Why, he lifted his hat, and wished us good-day in the cheeriest manner possible, just as if he had met us by appointment to help find a hare for the beagles.

Probably he was there for no very legitimate

purpose, but at the moment he was, of course, on the footpath, where he had as much right to be as any-one else ; and one could hardly help sympathising with the love of sporting adventure which was doubtless the main cause of his poaching proclivities. At any rate, he found us many a hare, and was an important factor in bringing not a few to hand.

No attempt has been made to describe in detail the different methods of hunting beagles, or the different stamp of beagle which is suitable for different countries, as all these points have been dealt with in the *Hunting* volume of the 'Badminton Library.' The writer has merely attempted to place before the reader a picture (very imperfect, doubtless) of such leading episodes in this sport as he has himself witnessed many and many a time ; and if the picture should by any lucky chance induce any reader of these pages to be 'up and at it' by six o'clock in the morning, and test for himself the enjoyment of watching a good pack of beagles at work, he will, if he has any hunting instinct at all in him, assuredly be well repaid, and the writer will not have writtten in vain.

# HARRIERS

BY J. S. GIBBONS

## CHAPTER I

### HARE-HUNTING—ANCIENT AND MODERN

THE sport of hunting a hare with a pack of hounds is so old that, in comparison with it, fox-hunting is but a plant of mushroom growth. We can, indeed, find no record to decide when this particular form of sport was first practised ; but if we go back to the time when old Xenophon cheered his hounds on the slopes of Mount Pholoe it is far enough for practical purposes ; *εὖγε, εὖγε, ὦ κύρες* was a bit of the hound language of that day, and doubtless as well understood by the pack as the 'hunting noises' of a later generation. In many respects, no doubt, the sport was different then ; the hounds must have been slow, very slow, for the means of catching the hare were by nets placed across the runs which, in the judgment of the huntsman of the time, the hare was likely to use

during the chase. It was seldom that the hounds actually caught a hare themselves ; the object was to keep the quarry on the move, so that she might finally run into some of the toils which the huntsman had employed his woodcraft to place in the most likely spots. A real straight hare must have been a sad nuisance to these old-world sportsmen.

To come down to comparatively our own times, there is still a vast difference in the style in which the hare was pursued not so very long ago and that which is in vogue to-day. In the last generation, when the guns in a country parish could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and wiring was an art in its infancy ; when game preserving, in the modern sense, was not, hares lived under rather different circumstances from those of our day. Hares could be found almost anywhere on likely ground ; they were thinly scattered about, and there were few places where they existed in large numbers. Now all this is altered ; where hares are highly preserved there are so many of them that hunting is impossible, and in unpreserved districts almost everyone carries a gun. A hare is pursued to the death as soon as heard of, and those which may escape the gun are most likely to end their career in the wire of the poaching labourer, who can set his snares with little danger of

detection where there is no keeper about ; so that hare-hunting, like other sports, has become more artificial. There are plenty of localities where it is still a highly popular form of amusement, but circumstances must be favourable ; farmers and landowners must be well disposed, and preserve hares on purpose for hunting, or it is of little use keeping a pack of harriers. Happily this state of things prevails in many places, and there appears to be little danger of this ancient and interesting branch of sport disappearing from the list of our outdoor amusements.

In all sports the changes that have taken place have been very much of the same character ; the deliberate way of proceeding which satisfied our ancestors will not do for the sportsman of our times, who must cram his diversion into a shorter space of time and get more out of it while he is about it. Our forefathers used to sally forth at an early hour, and the first business was to unravel the winding track which the hare had pursued whilst feeding during the night, until they finally hunted up to where she lay in her form. Then the run proper began, and a long time it seems to have generally lasted. In the charming account of a day with Sir Roger de Coverley's harriers, the hare is said to have been picked up alive eight yards before the hounds, who

had been pursuing her for nearly as many hours. The pace must have been slow indeed for a hare to be alive at all after such a prolonged chase. In another old book, entitled 'Of the Hunting of an Hare,' the huntsman is enjoined to mark carefully the first bendings and circles of his quarry, for 'she will all day long hold the same wayes' ; so that our forefathers, when they had once found their hare, managed to get a considerable amount of sport out of her, and probably after all enjoyed it as much as the more impatient sportsman of modern times, who thinks that twenty minutes without a check is the most desirable form the chase can take.

Packs of harriers, too, were kept on very different lines ; country gentlemen and even substantial yeomen farmers kept a few couple of hounds with which they went out whenever they felt inclined, for their own amusement and that of a few immediate neighbours. There are probably few parishes in England or Wales where a small pack of harriers or beagles has not been kept at some time or other. Other times, other manners ; the country gentlemen of moderate estate have sadly diminished in numbers, and the substantial yeoman farmer may be said to have practically disappeared ; their private little packs are gone with them, and the chase of the hare is now carried on in

much the same way as that of the fox. Many packs of harriers are recognised local institutions, supported either wholly or partly by subscriptions, whilst others are owned and kept by private individuals ; but all have their settled days of hunting, and most have their recognised area of country, and do not trespass on each other's territories. The sound advice of Beckford, not to take hounds out on a very windy day, can no longer be followed in hare-hunting any more than in fox-hunting, for fixtures when made must be kept, or the master would soon get into trouble.

Instead of the old plan of going out early in the morning and hunting the trail of a hare up to her seat, the meets are now usually about eleven o'clock, when hounds can seldom do much in the way of unravelling the hare's nocturnal wanderings, and she has to be looked for in the most likely places, according to the local information supplied to the master. The run itself, too, is a somewhat different affair ; hounds must be faster, and possessed of more driving powers than of old, for, if the scent is really good, from twenty to forty minutes generally ends the career of a hare, while even what is now called a slow hunting run will seldom much exceed an hour and a half—rather a change from the chases of several hours'

duration which were the delight of our forefathers. Hares may have been stronger in those times ; probably they were to some extent, owing to being more thinly scattered about the country, and accustomed to travel greater distances in search of food and of each other ; but the main reason must be the greater pace at which modern hounds are able to do their work. For good or for evil the old type of bow-wowling harrier is gone, and has been succeeded by a more rapidly working animal ; but we will discuss the peculiarities of the modern harrier in another chapter.

## CHAPTER II

## THE HARRIER

THE question has often been asked, What is a harrier? The only answer that can be fairly made to it is that a harrier is a hound which is used for hunting a hare. Many men interested in the sport will doubtless demur to this definition, but if half a dozen of them are asked what the harrier should be, it will be generally found that they will describe half a dozen hounds, all differing from each other in important features ; and who is to decide when doctors disagree? To pass in review the types of hounds still in use which have distinct characteristics, we will begin with what is at present known as the 'Old English Harrier,' whose home is now principally in Lancashire and the neighbourhood, where several packs of this type exist. They are very large hounds, often standing considerably over twenty inches in height, high on the leg, a little rough in the coat, with very long,

drooping ears, and possessed of a very deep voice, of which they make plenty of use when at work. They can hunt a very cold scent ; their legs and feet are not of the best from a hound point of view, which is the case with all the old breeds of harrier ; their colour is as a rule a blue mottle, with red and white intermixed.

There is another and smaller type of blue mottled harrier which is more often met with in the South of England. These are probably allied in blood to the hounds I have been describing, but they certainly do not appear to be the same breed. They are much smaller, their heads are different, and they vary distinctly in build and general appearance from their larger brethren in the North, whom they resemble, however, in having plenty of music, and being able to hunt a cold scent. If we go into Wales, we find the old rough Welsh harrier still existing, though in diminishing numbers – a rough wiry-coated hound, light of bone and build, and still a great favourite with old-fashioned Welsh sportsmen in mountainous districts, where hounds have to do most of their work alone, as their huntsman can only as a rule be with them now and then during the chase. If we cross the Severn sea to get into Devon and Somerset and the West Country generally, the pre-

vailing type of hound to be found in most of the packs of this district is again of quite a different character.

What we may call the Devonshire harrier is no doubt a very old breed of hound, and has probably been used in the West of England for so long that it would be of little use to inquire into its origin. A long narrow head is a point about these hounds, which are generally rather light of bone and substance, and also in colour. This latter point is to be explained in a very practical way. The West of England is not a country where it is possible, as a rule, for horsemen to keep continuously with hounds for long at a time, and it is a considerable advantage to have a pack of a lightish colour, as they can be more easily seen from a distance. These hounds do their work in a particularly quick and lively style, which can be noted to great advantage by those who are fortunate enough to have a day on the slopes of Exmoor with the Quarne Harriers, of which Mr. Chorley has been master for many years. This pack and that of Sir John Amory are two of the best-known and most carefully bred to type of the existing packs of their breed, and though on the flags they may not exactly satisfy the fastidious modern hound critic in the matter of legs and feet, it will probably be long before the Devonshire hare-

hunters forsake a type of hound which has been so long used in that locality.

All the hounds mentioned up to the present are entirely free from any admixture of foxhound blood ; in fact, they were used for hunting hares before fox-hunting as a regular and distinct sport was practised, and consequently before the modern foxhound was developed. We now come to the harriers which have foxhound blood in their veins to a greater or less extent ; and here it may be remarked that controversy has often waxed hot and strong among hare-hunters as to whether a foxhound cross is desirable or not in hounds destined for the chase of the hare. Some men will have none of it, and grow quite angry with those who are of an opposite way of thinking ; but without entering into the heated feelings of the champions on either side, let us calmly consider the pros and cons of the matter.

We may begin by admitting that where a man has a pack of hounds of an old and well-defined breed such as those we have described, which do their work to the satisfaction of all connected with them, it would seem a pity to introduce any outside cross that would interfere with the recognised characteristics of the breed ; but where this is not the case, and the hound is of a more nondescript type, the question

arises, In what way is it best to set about improving him?

Hare-hunting, like other sports, has somewhat altered in character, as has been set forth in the preceding chapter. Modern sportsmen are eager to get over the ground more quickly than their ancestors desired to do ; consequently we must have a hound which can go a good pace, and to do this he must have good shoulders, legs and feet ; stamina and constitution he must have, or he is of little use ; and above all he must be gifted with that quality called 'drive,' which enables him to carry along whatever scent there is at the best pace obtainable under the circumstances. For his physical conformation it is impossible to find a better model than the fox-hound, who is certainly the most perfectly formed animal for combining pace and stamina in the whole of the canine world ; whilst for correcting the pottering habits of the old harrier and obtaining the driving qualities we now seek we can go to no better source.

The next point is not to neglect the actual hunting qualities of the animal we want, for these are, of course, at least as important as his make and shape. It can hardly help being true that a hound which is descended from generations of hare-hunting ancestors

must have implanted in him the instinct of hunting a hare in a manner most conducive to a successful result, and this hereditary instinct is a thing not to be lightly lost ; so let us try and combine the best physical and mental (if we may so call them) qualities that we can get. Now, the process of improving the ordinary harrier to be met with in this country has undoubtedly been going on rather fast of late years. Some little time ago an association of Masters of Harriers was formed and a Harrier Stud Book was started ; a yearly show has been established at Peterborough for the hounds contained in that Stud Book, and the show and the Stud Book combined are apparently effecting an important change in harriers. The physical points of the animal—legs and feet, necks and shoulders, loins and ribs—are being much more attended to than heretofore, with the result that the ordinary harrier is becoming a far more shapely animal to look at, whatever the effect on his nose and hunting powers may be ; and in regard to these latter most important points, there can be no reason to suppose that by increasing the physical powers of the hound you thereby deteriorate his hunting qualities ; so that there is every reason to hope that the harrier of the future will keep on improving in all the qualities which are essential towards his doing

his work to the satisfaction of those who follow him.

We have as yet omitted to discuss the best size for a harrier, and this must be left very much to the taste of the master. It is certainly true that there are differences in countries ; amongst little enclosures and in hilly districts a small hound of eighteen inches or so will answer the purpose, but in such countries as the Sussex Downs, or the wide-stretching pastures of the Craven Hunt in Yorkshire, hounds of that size would generally toil in vain after the strong hares that are accustomed to travel miles every night in their wanderings after such dainty bits of feeding as take their fancy ; also, where long distances have to be travelled by road to and from the meet, a hound of nineteen to twenty inches or so will be found to do his work with greater ease to himself and his master than a smaller one. The limits of height may be laid down between eighteen and twenty-one inches. The latter is big enough for any country, and anything under the smaller size has hardly enough power to do a day's work at a pace sufficient to justify the employment of horses as an aid to getting to hounds.

The easiest way of securing a level pack of hounds is, of course, to pick up drafts from fox-

hound kennels ; but though these take very quickly to the work of hunting the hare, they cannot be described as so well suited to the purpose as a hound bred from hare-hunting parents. They naturally fling forward a little too much, and have the appearance of overmatching the quarry they hunt ; though this is perhaps rather more so in appearance than in fact, for it is extraordinary how a good hare will get away from hounds which look, at any rate, as if they ought to catch her without much trouble. To sum up this vexed question of foxhound blood, it may be said that most of the best and smartest packs of harriers of the present day have a foxhound cross in them, and are all the better for it ; but it is not now necessary to go direct to foxhound kennels for any more, as there are plenty of hounds available for breeding purposes which leave little to be desired in the way of make and shape, and, moreover, are descended from genuine hare-hunting parents.

If the intending master of harriers wishes to lay the foundation of a good pack which he hopes to go on with for some time, the most satisfactory way of proceeding will be—he having, in the first place, made up his mind as to the size of hound he wants—to buy a pack, if there should happen to be a really good one in the market, or to buy, if not the lot, as many of

them as he can. If there is no such pack available, he may be advised to buy drafts from the best-known packs ; and it is a good line to go upon to buy from packs which are either under or over the standard of size he wishes to keep, as then he will get hounds which are being merely drafted for size, and for no fault, either physical or mental. After the pack has been formed, the next thing to consider is how to keep it up. By far the most interesting and satisfactory way is breeding a certain number of puppies every year, to fill up the inevitable gaps caused by old age and accidents ; and the youngest master will hardly need to be told that he should not breed from any bitches which have such radical defects as being noisy, mute, or having skirting propensities, all of which faults are beyond question hereditary. Next, let him exercise great care in the choice of his sires. The above remarks as to hereditary faults apply equally to them, and if he does not use really good-shaped hounds as sires, he can never expect to breed a satisfactory pack. If he has not any really first-class dog hounds of his own, let him not grudge the small expense of sending his bitches to the best-known kennels ; almost all masters are pleased to give the services of their stud dogs to anyone owning an established pack, and the results will be far more

satisfactory than if, as is too often the case, the master is contented with using the best dog he happens to have, rather than the best and most suitable he can find.

As to the number of hounds annually required, if the pack is to continue improving it will be necessary to send out to walk about three times as many puppies as will be needed for the year's entry. It will be found on an average of years that about one-third of these will die at walk, either from disease or accident, and of the two-thirds that come in, about half will be either too large or too small, or have some physical defects which unfit them for a place in a really first-class pack of hounds.

There is one pack of harriers which should not pass without special mention in this chapter, and that is the Brookside, which hunt on the Downs near Brighton. This is a pack which has been in existence for many years, with a very small admixture of foxhound blood, indeed hardly any at all. Some old pictures of these hounds, painted many years ago, show they were then very high on the leg and light in body ; and though they are now possessed of far more bone and substance than formerly, they have not entirely lost the old type shown in these pictures. They are very level, full of quality, and beautifully

marked, being mostly of a rich Belvoir tan ; their size is what some people would consider big, being from twenty to twenty-two inches, but they are well adapted to the chase of the strong hares which abound on the open, rolling country over which they hunt.

## CHAPTER III

## THE PURSUIT OF THE HARE

IN order to hunt the hare we must first find her. In September or the early part of October, when, to avoid the heat of the day, it is necessary to be out betimes in the morning, the drag of the hare may be struck and hunted up to her form, but later in the season this is seldom possible. In some parts of the country, and on some soils, the drag seems to last much longer than it does in most places ; in parts of Wales this is the case, and there hounds can often hunt a hare up to her form when the day is well advanced ; certain hounds, too, have the faculty of doing this when the majority of the pack can make nothing of it, but generally speaking this is not the way in which hares are found in the present day. To know where to look for a hare requires local knowledge of where the creatures generally lie ; plenty of likely-looking ground may be searched in vain for ever, and it is in particular fields, and even

particular parts of those fields, that hares are invariably found time after time.

In addition to this fact there are a few simple rules to remember. In drawing grass land, a field which has had no stock in it for some time is more likely than one which is full of stock, and on arable land the most promising place of all is a fallow which has been ploughed for at least a fortnight. Growing crops, such as wheat or beans, are almost equally worth drawing after they are up and the ground has been undisturbed for a time ; in fact, about the only place on which a hare will not make her form is where the soil has been recently worked and disturbed. Where quiet, undisturbed land, either arable or grass, cannot be found, the hedges must be systematically drawn ; and it is a good plan when expecting to find hares in hedges to keep the pack in the open and get some of the field to beat the hedges, as a hare jumping out of them is very apt to be chopped if the hounds are close to the fence.

Assuming that we have found our hare, the next thing is to hunt her in the style which is most conducive to a good run and a successful finish ; and this is not so easy as it looks. How few really first-class huntsmen we see, either of fox or hare ! A young man who does not know what nerve means, and is

only too ready to jump anything in order to be with his hounds, has not had time to acquire that knowledge of the habits of the animal he pursues which it is necessary that a really first-class huntsman should possess, and as he gets older and acquires knowledge and experience his nerve may forsake him, and jumping a big fence may not be quite such an unmixed pleasure as it was formerly. Although, of course, hard riding is not nearly so necessary in the more sober pursuit of the hare as it is in fox-hunting, still a huntsman must be with his hounds in order to know exactly what they have been doing when a check occurs. A huntsman who *sees* his pack check will often notice things which an outsider cannot tell him ; for instance, he may have observed that a hundred yards or so before they threw up some old and trustworthy hound may have turned out of the pack to one side for a moment, and then gone on again ; this will tell him that the hare has probably retraced her steps to this point, and then gone off in the direction indicated. Again, sheep, cattle or horses may have either headed the hare or crossed her line, and may be in a totally different part of the field immediately after hounds arrive on the scene. Little things of this sort, which the experienced eye will be continually noticing, few outsiders will know anything about at



'DOES NOT KNOW WHAT NERVE MEANS'

D. Giller  
1896



all, so that it is very necessary for a huntsman not to lose sight of his pack more than he can possibly avoid.

After the hare has been started and the run begun, the next thing that usually happens is the first check, which will probably occur after a few fields have been crossed. A hare will, as a rule, go straight on for a mile or so, and then make a sharp double, going off to the right or left. Hounds are particularly liable to overrun the scent at this period of the chase, for they are full of dash and go, have been excited by a view, and very likely the keenest riders are a little too close to them, and push them on. If the huntsman knows the country and the run of the hares, he will usually have a pretty good idea of how to put things right at the first check, that is to say, if the hounds' own cast fails to recover the line. They should always be allowed to make their own cast first, for if picked up and cast by their huntsman directly a check occurs, they will very soon get into the habit of waiting to be shown where to go, instead of trying for themselves. If hounds fail to hit off the line by their own efforts, the huntsman should then cast them to the right or left, and inclining backwards, as his previous experience has taught him what the run of the hare is likely to be ; and this done, we will sup-

pose the line successfully hit off and the run proceeding.

Further checks will doubtless take place, and will test the capacity of hounds and huntsman a good deal more than the first. As the hare finds herself more pressed she will try shifts and dodges which show an extraordinary amount of natural instinct in evading pursuit ; though if we consider for a moment what the life of a hare is, it is not so wonderful after all, for a hare, when we come to think of it, spends her life in being hunted. Stoat, weasel, fox, or dog, one or the other, is constantly after her, and the hereditary instinct she possesses of evading all these from her earliest youth teaches her, when pursued by a pack of hounds, to try the same expedients which have been successful in baffling her various pursuers many times before.

It is a good education in studying the wiles of a hunted hare to walk after one for a couple of hours or more in freshly fallen snow. The distance she will come back on her own track, the extraordinary leaps she will make at right angles to it before starting afresh in another direction, the circles and windings she will describe, will be astonishing to anyone who has never tried this method of investigating the dodges of a hunted hare. After she has

practised some of her manoeuvres without success, she will generally lie down after doubling back on her own track and striking out sideways for a few yards, and having done this, there she will stay till hounds have passed her, and then sometimes steal away when she thinks she is unobserved ; but she will more often remain till the close proximity of man or hound induces her again to seek safety in flight. In the early part of the season a hare will stop and lie down in this way frequently, but after Christmas and later they keep going more continuously, and are often never viewed after the start till they are pretty well beaten ; indeed, after February comes in a jack hare takes a great deal of tiring. He is engaged in either fighting or love-making all night, he grows lean and spare, and withal as hard as he can possibly be. When he first gets up he often appears to run slowly, as if stiff, which perhaps he is after his night's exertions ; but when once he warms to his work he will lead his pursuers many a mile before he succumbs, and if it is a bad scenting day a good jack hare will generally get the best of it at this time of year.

A hare that runs along a road for a considerable distance affords one of the main difficulties a hare-hunter has to encounter. If the master owns a really good road hound he has a valuable treasure ; very

few hounds acquire the peculiar attribute of being able to make out the scent along a road, and when a hound once develops this special quality it is astonishing at what a pace he will carry it along, while the rest of the pack follow, unable to make anything of it at all. Hounds should never be pressed in the slightest along a road ; even the huntsman should not ride too close to them, but at just such a distance that he can keep his eye on his trusty road hound, and see to an inch how far he or she carries it. If, however, the master does not possess such a serviceable animal, or if even that treasure's nose should fail in solving the problem, his own eyes may help him out of the difficulty should the road be wet enough for the hare to leave the print of her footmarks. It has been urged that to 'prick' a hare is to take an unfair advantage of her, but why should this be so? Hunting is a joint-stock concern, to which both the hounds and huntsman contribute their part ; the object is to show a run, and if the hounds are at fault the huntsman may surely employ all his resources in order to avoid losing the hare, which may bring a promising run to a premature end. The huntsman will do well, too, to keep an eye on the hedges on each side of the road, and mark any meuses he can see ; a tell-tale bit of fur left in one of these will often show

him where his hare has left the road, and save valuable time.

As long as a hare runs her usual and accustomed rings the huntsman will make his casts according as his previous experience has shown him the direction in which they are likely to be successful ; but if once a hare loses herself and begins to go straight, he must act upon different lines altogether, and when this happens it is the very cream of hare-hunting, the one thing for which the huntsman is always longing.

It is difficult to say exactly what makes a hare lose herself, and, as the old books term it, 'make off end-ways,' an altogether delightful phrase, and not to be improved by any modern emendation. If you try and ride a hare off her accustomed route, though it may be occasionally successful, she generally doubles back under your horse's heels and betakes herself to her well-known ground once more. A hare more often goes straight when she has obtained a considerable lead of hounds, and then appears to lose herself for no apparent reason. It may be that a flock of sheep or some galloping colts have met her at a critical point, and turned her into some field which lies off her accustomed track ; but, at any rate, it is the fact that she generally loses herself when there is no apparent reason for her doing so. When this

desirable event has taken place, an observant huntsman will soon notice it. If hounds run through two or three gates or stiles in succession, or the hare has scrambled through some thick fence where there is obviously no meuse, the odds are that she is out of her country, and will keep running on in as straight a line as she can. When the huntsman has reason to think that this has happened, he may adopt tactics different from his ordinary mode of procedure. If a check occurs he can cast forward more as though he were hunting a fox ; but he must watch every turn or twist of his hounds, so as not to miss any indication they may give him of the line of his hare. He has no probable point, such as a covert or main earth, to speculate on, as the fox-hunter has ; it is uncertain from field to field which way his quarry may turn, and therefore his attention must be closely concentrated on his hounds, for he has no other guidance. Should the scent be good, he will probably be rewarded by a satisfactory finish, and in any case, after this sort of run, he should never give it up as long as a chance remains of killing his hare, for she has probably run to the extent of her powers, and will never move again from the spot where she finally lies down. Of course this is not invariably the case ; it has often been practically certain that the same

hare has afforded two or three good runs ; but hares are frequently picked up dead near where they have been lost after a good run—more often than is generally supposed, as the finder, who is frequently a labourer, does not usually think fit to publish abroad his lucky discovery. A strong hare will cover a great deal more country than is usually supposed. If she starts a straight run fairly fresh, she is quite capable of making a five or six mile point when not too much pressed, and there have been plenty of instances where a straight run has exceeded this without any change of hare, so far as could be ascertained. It is very unlikely that any change could have taken place, for as it is the ordinary habit of a hare to run in a circle, it is extremely improbable that, after running one hare in a straight line for some distance, another would be so obliging as to get up and forthwith go identically in the same direction. Were hares to ‘make off endways’ more often, hare-hunting would be a still more attractive sport than it is.

There are a few points which may be borne in mind by a young huntsman. A beaten hare seldom turns downhill ; therefore, if a hare is manifestly out of her country and getting near the end of her powers, a cast should always be made up a hillside rather than down. Another point to remember is, that if

hounds which have been running slowly suddenly quicken their pace for a short distance, and then throw up, the hare is probably behind you. She has doubled back on her line, and the quickened pace is caused by the double line of scent. Another very important thing is never to make too sure that your hare has lain down. When a hare runs into a small covert it is too often assumed that she must have stopped there ; hounds very likely do not carry a line through ; the ground is often stained with rabbits, and many coverts never seem to hold a scent. Always cast round it and make sure she has not gone on ; you will often find that she has, and this is the very sort of hare which will give you the best run. In cases where you fail to hit off a line forward, there is plenty of time to come back and look for her if she has stopped in covert. These remarks apply equally to the case of gardens and such-like places, where people are always too ready to say that the hare is sure to have stopped, when very likely she has merely threaded them, doubled about a bit, and gone on again.

Another great difficulty the hare-hunter has to contend against is a change of hares. This will occur sometimes in defiance of all precautions. A fresh hare, hearing the noise of hounds, will get up some distance in front of them, and go through the same

meuses as the hunted one, so that you may change without knowing it; and a very fruitful source of changing is foot-people, who will holloa every hare they see. It is not always easy to distinguish a hunted hare from a fresh one. When the ground is wet and heavy, a hare which has been on foot for some time naturally gets dirty and dark-coloured, and under these circumstances there should not be much difficulty in recognising the hunted animal; but when the ground is dry, colour is no help, and the only thing to look for is whether the hare carries her hind-quarters higher than usual—whether she is what is technically termed ‘high on her legs.’ A hare after being hunted for some time will present this appearance, while a fresh one will be seen to run with a more level back. One more piece of advice must be given, and that is, always to conduct hare-hunting with as little noise as possible. A noisy huntsman soon makes wild hounds, and it is very much easier to get hounds’ heads up than to steady them down again.

Quietness is particularly essential at the beginning of a run. What appears to be a flashy, bad scent often turns out to be a very useful one when hounds have got quietly settled down to it, but this they will never do if hurried along at first. Holloas there must be, of course; and very useful they are at

times, too, but hounds should never be allowed to *go* to them. Let the huntsman *take* them there, if he decides to do so, without loss of time, but with as little excitement as possible, and they will then stoop to the line much quicker than if they are allowed to go flying off by themselves. When the huntsman wants his hounds to come to him, let him always use his horn, and reserve his holloa for occasions when he intends the hounds to get their heads up, which will occasionally be the case, as, for example, when he is anxious that they should view the beaten hare, when he wishes to get them off the line of a fresh one, or away from a railway train. Cheering hounds on a line, though often practised, is a very unnecessary proceeding. It may amuse the man who makes the noise, but the only effect it has on hounds is, as a rule, to cause some of them to look up, as if to ask what in the world that stupid noise is about? It is especially in the early part of the season that great pains should be taken in the matter of keeping hounds as steady as possible, and not allowing them to go to holloas. If this is carefully attended to during the first two months or so of the season, a little more latitude may be allowed later without doing much harm; but if a pack gets wild to start with, a wild pack it will be all the season through.

A few of the exceptional instances of the hare's cunning which have come under my personal observation may be mentioned. A hunted hare will occasionally lie down alongside a fresh one, evidently in the hope that when both jump up the burden of the chase may be shifted on to the fresh animal. This manœuvre is very similar to the well-known ruse of the hunted stag, who will rouse a younger animal from his lair, and lie down in it himself. In stone-wall countries a hare will sometimes run a considerable distance along the top of a wall, and then jump down and make off; but she will never do this unless she thinks she is unobserved. I once lost a hare three times unaccountably at exactly the same place. On the third occasion a heavy snowstorm came on at the time, and everyone went off to the nearest shelter. Whilst we were away a man on foot went into a pigstye, which hounds had passed some distance before they threw up, and there found the hare, which got away in safety. No doubt she had doubled straight back on her line before taking refuge, and had practised this manœuvre on all three occasions.

Now and then hares will go to ground either in a rabbit-hole or a culvert. They will rarely do this till they are pretty well beaten, and when they have sought shelter in this manner they should always be

got out, if possible, for two reasons : it is a great chance if they will ever come out alive, and, besides this, the odds are that there is some loafer about who quietly marks the circumstance, and will return when all is quiet and transfer that hare to his own pocket.

The subject of bleeding their hounds has often exercised the minds of young masters of harriers. It is argued that hounds must have blood to make them keen in pursuit, and that therefore they should have a hare to tear to pieces occasionally ; but experience and reflection will show that this is totally unnecessary. Any dog used in the finding or pursuing of wild animals must, it is true, be satisfied that he has obtained his object, or he will get slack ; nevertheless, the actual devouring of the quarry is not necessary.

Let us take the analogy of other dogs used for sporting purposes. The pointer, the setter, or the spaniel never break up their game, and can any creatures be more keen about their business ? There are packs of pure bred Welsh foxhounds which are most savage on a fox, and will tear him out of a mountain-side if they can get at him, yet these hounds do not care to break their fox up, and after they have killed and worried him will not take any further notice of him. Again, let any master of either fox-

hounds or harriers reflect, and say whether it is not invariably the case that some of his best and keenest hounds will cease to take much interest in the body of the animal they have killed after once they are satisfied that they have killed whatever they have been hunting, and so attained their object. The keenest hounds at the worry are not always those which have contributed most to the successful issue of the chase. The subject is one of considerable importance to hare-hunters, as there is nothing that will reconcile a farmer so much to the spectacle of broken fences and trampled crops as the present of a hunted hare, which should always be given to the man on whose land she was found. This cannot be too strongly insisted on; it is only fair, and as a matter of policy it will be found to be worth more than any other present that could be offered.

This leads us up to the subject of managing a harrier country, which is mainly a question of tact on the part of the master. It is his duty to know personally all the farmers over whose land he hunts, and if he will approach them in the right way, consult their convenience, and avoid doing unnecessary damage, he will rarely find the British agriculturist a bad sort of man to get on with; but the farmer will not be treated with neglect, and small blame to

him either. He knows he is conferring a favour by allowing his land to be hunted over, and he expects to get civility in return. That hunting men should buy their stable requisites as far as possible from farmers who support hunting is also most desirable, and it cannot be said that there is anything unreasonable in these requirements.

There are a few other matters to be thought of by a master of harriers. Shooting interests should always be respected, and a master should never allow his hounds to enter a covert where game is preserved till after it has been shot. The golden rule in all sport, as in everything else, is to do as you would be done by, and if the master acts up to this he will have the satisfaction of knowing that at all events he has done all he could to keep matters on a satisfactory basis.

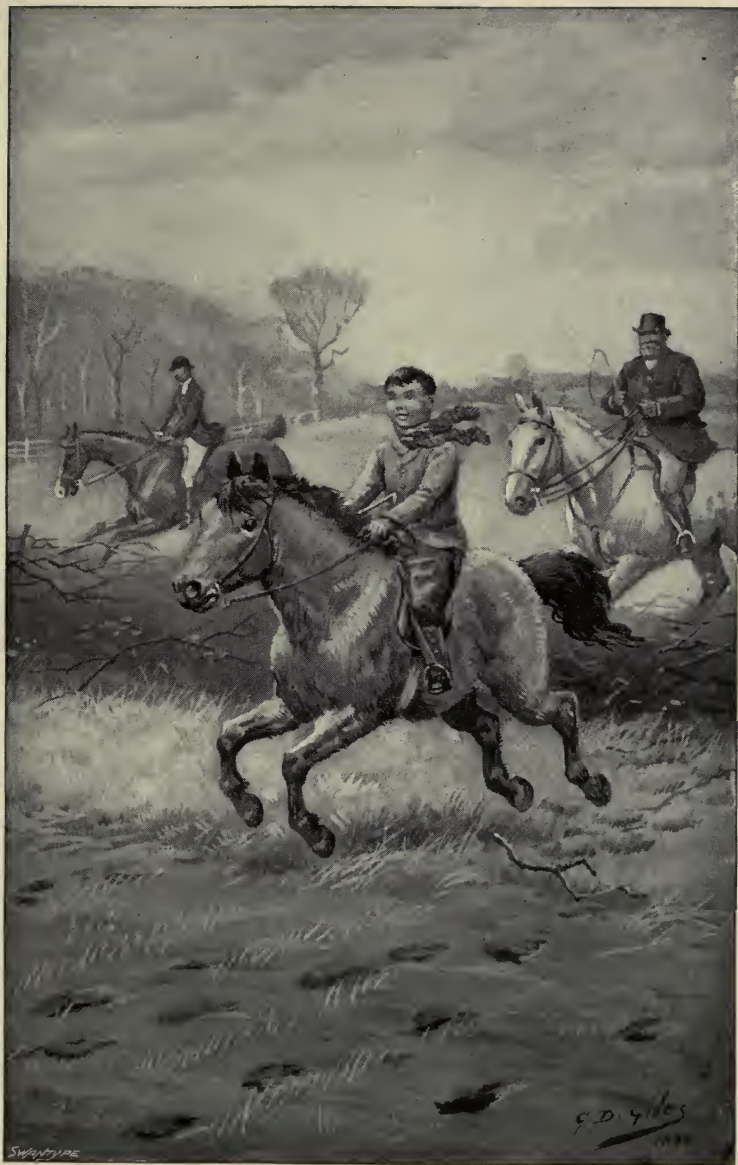
A few words on the relation of hare-hunting to fox-hunting may not be out of place here. These two sports ought to be carried on hand in hand, and a pack of harriers properly managed should be an advantage in a fox-hunting country rather than otherwise. Live and let live is the maxim to be followed. The hare-hunter should so conduct his sport as not to do anything which may be detrimental to the interests of fox-hunting, and the fox-hunter, on his

part, should endeavour to work with the master of harriers for the sport in general of the countryside. Oftentimes the relations of the master of foxhounds and the master of harriers will be most cordial, and this is as it should be ; but it is not always so, and the subject will stand thrashing out a bit. The hare-hunter must admit that fox-hunting is the premier sport. From its very nature it allows a larger number of people to take part in it, and it is a national institution, to be fostered and supported by all true sportsmen. The master of harriers, therefore, should always be careful not to interfere with the sport of fox-hunting in the slightest. It goes without saying that he should never allow his hounds to run a fox ; and this is also to his own interests, for as no man can serve two masters, so no pack of hounds can with advantage hunt anything but their proper quarry. The two styles of hunting are different, and it cannot be expected that a hound should hunt fox one day and hare another, and do his work as efficiently as if he were kept to the pursuit of one animal, and one only.

In the next place, care should be taken not to disturb coverts which foxhounds are going to draw within the next two or three weeks. If the master has meets in the immediate neighbourhood of regular fox coverts, let him go there as soon as possible after

foxhounds have drawn them, and then he will do little or no harm if he happens to run into them ; but to disturb a covert with harriers shortly before it is to be drawn for a fox is certainly to endanger the chance of a fox being found there. When a master of harriers attends to his duties in these respects, the master of foxhounds will have no reason to complain of him, but the contrary, for let us look at the other side of the question. A pack of harriers disturbs many and many a fox from the fields and hedgerows which would never have been found by the foxhounds, which, having been disturbed from their outlying haunts, are more likely to seek shelter in the coverts on a future occasion, and will not by jumping up in the open spoil a good run, as is so often the case. The good that harriers do in this direction far outweighs the possible harmful results of their running into a covert now and then, if, as has been already pointed out, they only do this when foxhounds are not likely to draw the covert for some time to come.

Another great point in favour of hare-hunting which is not sufficiently thought of by foxhunters is that it brings the young idea up in the way it should go. The farmer's boy on his rough pony gets a period of perfectly ecstatic delight out of a day with the harriers. Foxhounds he only comes across occa-



'THE FARMER'S BOY ON HIS ROUGH PONY GETS A PERIOD OF ECSTATIC DELIGHT'



sionally, when they meet in his immediate neighbourhood ; he is lost in a big crowd, and never sees much of the hounds. But if a pack of harriers hunts the country round, the boy can often get a holiday to go out with them ; he sees a lot of hound work, there is plenty of room for him, the love of hounds and hunting enters into his soul, and he becomes in after-life a staunch supporter of hunting in all its branches. So that the master of foxhounds, when he is assured that harriers are conducted on proper lines, should on his part hold out the hand of fellowship to his hare-hunting brother, that they may endeavour by mutual concessions to make the two sports work as harmoniously as they always ought to do.

One word more. Many of our most famous huntsmen, both gentlemen and professional, have been entered at hare ; and if we had to train up a huntsman from his early youth, we should recommend his serving an apprenticeship of running with beagles. There he will learn to depend on himself in getting to hounds, which is not all done by mere riding, and he will obtain an insight into many *minutiæ* of hunting which are better learnt before a man is thinking much of the riding part of the business, a thing that will come to him fast enough afterwards.

And so, both for its own sake and that of other

sports which it fosters, may hare-hunting ever flourish ; and certainly, from the number of packs now engaged in the pursuit, and the great interest shown in breeding and improving the harrier, there appears to be little doubt that this time-honoured sport will continue to hold its own amongst the other outdoor pursuits which make country life in England so well worth living.

THE COOKERY OF THE HARE

BY

COL. KENNEY HERBERT



## THE COOKERY OF THE HARE

As an introduction to this pleasant subject it is advisable, I think, to trace the history of the hare as an article of food from the earliest English records, and, after showing what our ancestors did with it, to pass on to the various methods adopted for its treatment in the modern kitchen ; for, oddly enough, it will be found that there is a distinct similarity to be detected between some of the processes which were in vogue six hundred years ago and those that are followed in the present day.

On the very threshold of this retrospect, it is interesting to find that at the time of the Roman Conquest the hare was not considered fit to eat. Julius Cæsar mentions this as one of the peculiarities of the Angli, adding that they kept the animal merely *voluptatis causâ*. ‘But,’ says Mr. Carew-Hazlitt in his treatise on ‘Old Cookery Books and Ancient Cuisine,’ ‘the way in which the author of the “Commentaries” puts it induces the persuasion that by *lepus* he means

not the hare, but the rabbit, as the former would scarcely be domesticated.' At all events, there is no mention of either in the early lists of foodstuffs, and the natural inference is that the prejudice against them was overcome either under Norman influence, or by the example of some of the many uninvited guests who visited the island between the Roman occupation and the coming of William the Conqueror.

The Northerners of those times were essentially meat-eating folk, who depended largely upon their bows and spears for their food. Have we not all read *à propos* of these hardy people, that when the cupboard was bare, an empty trencher with a pair of spurs laid upon it was presented to the master of the house as a delicate hint that he must needs go forth and kill something? The habit of eating game may have come from even more immediate neighbours, for though the southern Britons, who first came under the observation of Cæsar, were vegetarians, subsisting on milk, coarse cakes, wild honey, fruits, and such vegetables as were known to them, the inhabitants of the interior and districts further north—especially the Scots—had certainly discovered the edible value of the fish in their rivers and wild animals in their woods. Cæsar mentions having heard of this. It can easily be understood, then, that the spread of a similarly

wise appreciation was only a matter of time and intercourse.

The chronicles of the kitchen in the days of the Saxon and Danish kings are, however, very obscure ; and although we know that with the Norman Conquest an improved culinary system was introduced, with much sumptuous feasting, especially in the religious houses, it was not until the time of Richard II. that a *bonâ fide* English cookery book was compiled. This was, no doubt, a compendium of precepts which had been handed down from time to time. Some of them, indeed, are said to have been taken from the work of Cœlius Apicius, while in many, traces of Norman and French inspiration are clearly perceptible. At any rate, all fastidiousness as to fish, flesh, and fowl seems to have disappeared before the 'Forme of Cury' was written 'by the avisement and consent of the masters of physick and philosophy that dwelt at Court,' and dedicated in 1381 to the 'best and ryallist vyander of alle Christian Kynges ;' for here at last we find our hare.

Now, in order to appreciate the 'formes' of hare 'cury' to be found in this interesting old roll, we must bear in mind that forks had not been invented, and that the cook specially applied himself to the concoction of dishes that could be easily eaten with a

spoon assisted by a piece of bread. Hence we find that all the special 'nyms' or recipes in Richard II.'s manual prescribe the hewing of flesh into gobbets. This is the case with the three preparations of hare therein recorded :—' Harys in cynee,' 'harys in papdele' or 'padell,' and 'harys in talbotis' or 'talbotays.' 'Cynee' was remarkably like *soubise*, a *purée* of onions slightly thickened with breadcrumb, for *roux* had not then been thought of. In this the pieces of hare were stewed. 'Papdele' or 'padell' was a stew into which 'obleys' or 'wafrons' (soft cakes), composed very much in the same way as our hare stuffing, were introduced. These were first 'cowched in the dyshe,' after which the pieces of hare were laid 'onoward (over), and messed forth.' Here we have the same effect as that produced in 'jugged hare,' when balls or discs of stuffing are added to it. As for the 'harys in talbotays,' there is such a marked resemblance to the comparatively modern *civet de lièvre* that it must be quoted *in extenso* :—

'Take harys, and hewe hem to gobbettes, and seeth hem wyth the blode unwaished in broth of fleshe, and when they buth y-nouh (be enough), cast hem in colde water. Pyke and waish hem clene. Cole the broth, and drawe it thurgh stynnor (through a strainer). Take other blode, and cast in boylyng water, seeth it,

and draw it thurgh stynnor. Take almanndes un-blanced, waish hem, and grynde hem, and temper it up with the self (same) broth. Cast al in a pot. Take 'oybons and parboyle hem. Smyte hem small, and cast hem into the pot; cast thereover powderfort (spiced pepper), vynegar, and salt, temper with wyn, and messe forth.'

The use of the blood to enrich a hare stew—a practice maintained to this day in hare soup—is, therefore, actually as old as the hills, while the association with it of onions, wine, and seasoning, has not been changed. This will be referred to later on.

A noteworthy point in connection with the compilation of the 'Forme of Cury' is that for the first time 'masters of physick' are mentioned as authorities on cookery, the study of the art having previously been monopolised by the clergy, who, according to Mr. Carew-Hazlitt, 'were led to seek some compensation for the loss of other earthly pleasures in those of the table.' From that time forth until now the subject has engaged the attention of the medical profession, to the manifest advantage of mankind; nevertheless, there have been days of darkness even among the doctors, and the funniest dogmas were promulgated by the learned men of old time concerning the dietetic properties of food, many of which became deeply

rooted in the mind of the public, and were only removed long years afterwards. Among these crotchets there was one about the hare. Writing in 1660, Doctor Tobias Venner discourses thus quaintly :—

‘Hare’s flesh, especially if it be of an old hare, is of a very dry temper, of a hard digestion, and breedeth melancholy more than any other flesh, which the blacknesse thereof convinceth. Wherefore, it is not for the goodnesse of the meat that hares are so often hunted, but for recreation and exercising of the body ; for it maketh a very dry, thick, and melancholick blood, bindeth the belly, and being often eaten, breeds incubus, and causeth fearfull dreams. The younger are far better, by reason that the natural siccity of the flesh is somewhat tempered by the moisture of tender age. The flesh of young hares is somewhat easily digested, is acceptable to the palat and stomach, and yeildeth nourishment laudable enough, yet may I not commend it to such as are affected with melancholy.’ We, who have been recently forbidden to eat oysters lest they breed a pestilence within us, can readily believe that for many a long day the eating of hares was in this way made unpopular. As a matter of fact, the prejudice against them seems to have continued until Grimod de la Reynière, with the authority of Doctor Pedro Rezio de Tirtea Fuera to support

him, ridiculed the foolish scruples of the past, and in his 'Almanach des Gourmands' (1803) placed the flesh of hares first in the list of dark meats.

We have now tracked our hare to the period of its history when at length it was given its proper position amongst game in the larder. Thenceforward it received the earnest attention of cooks and the esteem of connoisseurs ; and I hardly think that the consumption of its flesh—with all due deference to Dr. Tobias Venner—has materially added to the list of suicides, or of those unfortunate insanes who suffer from melancholia. Let us now discuss the cookery of the animal according to the canons of modern gastronomy.

'First catch your hare.' Now this I say in sober earnest. It is not a misquotation from good Mrs. Glasse, who neither made use of the words so often imputed to her, nor the sentence which commentators have ingeniously substituted, 'first case your hare.' If we consult the 'Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy,' we find that what Hannah actually wrote was, 'take your hare when it is cased.' No : I use the old saying to show that first and foremost there is a great deal in the choice of the animal for the table, for in plain truth there be hares and hares. Importation from abroad has brought all sorts of game—the

subject of our discussion among them—into the London market, and if the question be one of purchase, the exercise of a wise discretion is absolutely necessary. Happy are they who either kill their own hares, or receive them from friends in the country, for concerning such there need be no uncertainty. The only alternative is to make a personal friend of your game-dealer, and place your case entirely in his hands. As I hope presently to show, he is in a position to know where his hares come from, how they were killed, and the day on which they ought to be eaten.

Why is this discrimination indispensable? Well, has it not been explained already in the *Cookery* sections of previous volumes of 'Fur and Feather' that, critically speaking, a very great difference exists in the edible quality of pheasants and partridges according to the conditions in which they are reared and fed, and the manner of their being brought to bag? Connoisseurs have laid down the rule that partridges killed in one county are better than those of another, and that pheasants artificially bred and specially fed are not to be compared with birds reared in a naturally wild state, and self-fed according to the resources of wood, field, and hedgerow. It is, moreover, a fact well known by those who have studied the

subject, that wounded game retrieved after a day's suffering is only fit for the game stockpot. This, too, is the only alternative to adopt in regard to that which has been badly shot, after the better parts have been chosen for the extraction of *fumet* or essence, an invaluable medium for the improvement of game sauces, *salmis*, and soups.

Touching the questions, then, of selection and quality. If we search the literature of cookery of the present century, it is surprising how little we find recorded on this important point. Grimod de la Reynière laid down that the hare of the mountains was better than her sister of the plains. Brillat Savarin's opinion was that while a hare killed in the neighbourhood of Paris seemed but a poor dish, a leveret from the sunny slopes of Val Romey in Ain, or the highlands of Dauphiné, might be pronounced the finest flavoured of all quadrupeds. M. Gogué, an able French chef, pronounced in favour of mountain hares that had fed upon wild thyme and other wild, aromatic plants ; and M. Servais, a Belgian writer, said the same, adding like a good sportsman, that one well shot should be chosen before one caught in a snare, or bagged by any other means. Finding after a diligent search no more information than this, and absolutely nothing regarding English hares, I boldly

took counsel with Mr. Bellamy, of Jermyn Street, and in him was fortunate enough to find not only an experienced expert in regard to the selection of game, but an observant sportsman, a bit of a naturalist, and a practical amateur cook. What more could I want?

Now, it is interesting to announce that his view is quite in accord with the authorities I have just mentioned. It is briefly this : After she has put on her white winter coat, the Scotch mountain hare *for flavour* against the field, and for the very reasons that have been recorded in favour of the wild-bred, wild-fed pheasant. She feeds on wild, aromatic plants, lives in quite a wild state, is seldom disturbed, and really acquires something of the taste of grouse. The species is small, no doubt, and carries less flesh than the English hare or that of the Lowlands, but what there is of it is excellent. Yet, adds Mr. Bellamy, very few will allow this. As for the English hare, he points out that since the Ground Game Act came into force the animal has had to contend against too many enemies, with the result that it has deteriorated in its edible quality. That is to say, hares killed on preserved estates, where they have lived quietly without being harassed, are probably as good as ever they were, but not so where shooting is not restricted

and dogs wander at will. In the latter case Mr. Bellamy likens the condition of the unfortunate hare to that of a racehorse continually in training. Scrupulously judged, according to this authority, the best English hares for the table are those which come from the Wiltshire or Surrey Downs, the Cotswold Hills, the Welsh mountains, the moors of Devon and Yorkshire, &c., for in such regions they feed on wild stuff, thus surpassing those from agricultural districts that are nourished upon wheat and other crops, even on garden produce. Imported hares from Russia and Northern Germany should be described as large, coarse, and wanting in flavour, yet not to be wholly condemned for soup-making and stews for those to whom the British animal may be too expensive. They cannot, however, be considered as food meet for the true disciple of *Gastræa*.

There was an old idea, which may be retained by some, perhaps, to this day, that a coursed or hunted hare was infinitely superior, from an epicurean point of view, to one killed by the gun. Mr. Bellamy is altogether of a different opinion, going back to what has been said before about wounded game. Fright, he maintains, has just as prejudicial an effect upon the flesh as the pain of a broken leg. Thus we can accept Dr. Redgill's dictum in the 'Proceedings of

the Cleikum Club' recorded by 'Meg Dods' (said to have been written by Sir Walter Scott), that no hare tasted so well as 'one that had been shot in a gentlemanly way.'

Next in regard to preparation. Under this heading there are one or two points which ought to be mentioned. In the first place, a hare should not be paunched until it is required for the table, *à propos* of which operation no advice can be worse than that given in many cookery books (have I not sinned myself?) as to washing—even soaking—a hare. The process of cleaning should be conducted without the use of water, all blood should be saved with the liver, heart and kidneys, and when this has been done careful wiping with a clean dry cloth is all that is necessary. Flavour is lost by washing, while soaking draws out the blood—the very thing that you particularly want to keep in the flesh—and extracts nutritive value also. The question of marinading should now be decided. This is held by some to be advisable, and by others to be a mistake. My experience leads me to recommend the step in all cases in which the animal may come of an inferior breed—with the Indian hare, for instance, it is decidedly efficacious—and also when for any reason premature paunching cannot be avoided. The mixture best adapted for

use in this case is what is known as 'cooked marinade'; that is to say, onions, carrots, and sweet herbs, cut up small and fried in butter till coloured, and then moistened with vinegar and warm water in half-and-half proportions, with a seasoning of pepper and salt. Two minutes' boiling is enough, after which the liquid can be strained, and either white or red French wine added to the extent of one-third of the whole. A pint of this is enough for one hare, which should be put into a deep dish, the marinade being poured over it. After this, frequent turnings and bastings should be carried out until the time of dressing arrives, at which period the hare should be lifted from the dish and carefully dried. If required for roasting it should now be stuffed and trussed, while the marinade should be boiled up, skimmed carefully, and used if desired for *poivrade* sauce, of which I shall speak later on.

With a view to the retention of the juices during roasting, and the avoidance of the 'siccidity' mentioned by Tobias Venner, some artificial assistance is necessary. This of course may be done by larding or by barding. The former is generally resorted to by French cooks, while in the English kitchen the latter is preferred. Remembering that the preservation of flavour must not be lost sight of, barding would seem to be the better plan, for by penetrating the flesh

larding introduces a flavour of its own. The back and thighs of the hare having been covered with slices of fat bacon, a wrapper of buttered paper is necessary to protect the larding and keep it in its place. This should be secured with string, and then the toilet will be complete.

A few words about stuffing. This precaution is important for two or three reasons. It keeps the interior of the animal moist, it preserves, indeed adds to, its flavour, and it fills out the carcase, causing it to assume a better appearance. The usual English stuffing is well known ; all I would say about it is, that a little rosemary with the thyme and marjoram is nice, that some soak the breadcrumb in the wine chosen to appear in the sauce, and that butter is better than suet for the fatty element. I have found the following preparation about the best ; it is based upon Dubois' *farce à gratin de foie* :—Take the liver, heart, and kidneys of the hare, cut them up, and fry them (*faire revenir*) in an ounce of butter over a low fire with a tablespoonful each of minced Portugal onion and carrot, and a quarter of a pound of minced mushrooms. After five minutes' frying moisten with a sherry glass of chablis or sauterne, and add half an ounce of glaze. Continue to cook slowly, and as soon as the meat is soft let it get cold, and then

empty the contents of the *sauté*-pan into a mortar, pounding and passing the whole through a wire sieve. The *purée* thus obtained, seasoned with salt and pepper, should be stirred into a bowl with the usual six ounces of breadcrumb, minced or powdered herbs, zest of lemon, two ounces of butter and two eggs. Before packing the hare with this, line the inside with thin strips of cooked streaky bacon. Truss in the old-fashioned way, lengthwise. The sitting posture so often adopted is most inconvenient for the carver, and when one thigh is detached the hare rolls over upon its side—a wreck.

Everybody knows the standard dishes which have been associated with the name of the hare for upwards of a century : roast hare, the *civet de lièvre*, jugged hare, hare *en daube*, hare soups of sorts, and so on. Of these, perhaps the first has always been the least esteemed. Have not some undoubtedly good authorities declared that the hare was invented for soup or for the stew pan, and that it is but lost labour to roast the animal? With sundry sad experiences, such as most of us have had, of results almost as dry as ‘the back of an old Latin grammar,’ or the parched meat used by travellers in Persia—meat that you can snap like a biscuit—of stuffing of sodden, tasteless bread, and of general

disappointment in no way mitigated by heavy port-wine sauce and red-currant jelly—manly though the effort may have been to think so—it must be admitted that there is a good deal in the contention. Indeed, unless the operation be very well performed the justice of the criticism cannot be questioned ; for it is a fact that while the roasting of all game is a delicate job, needing a watchful eye and great nicety of judgment, the roasting of a hare is the most delicate job of all.

If, however, the selection be made judiciously, the hanging well timed, the preparations for the spit carefully carried out, and the process itself conducted before the fire with sympathy and intelligence, the result will certainly be gratifying. I was once able to prove this. The incident occurred on the Nilgiri Hills in Southern India, where a far better hare is found than on the plains, though inferior no doubt to the English variety, and poorly thought of by many. The question to roast or not to roast was one day earnestly debated between one of the best sportsmen that that charming place has ever known and myself. He—a squarson of the good old type, a friend in his youth of the celebrated Jack Russell, and equally at home whether in the saddle, with the gun, or at the table—maintained that no care in the roasting would

ever make a Nilgiri hare fit to be mentioned in comparison with an English one, while I humbly stated my opinion that the edible quality in either instance very much depended on the cooking. A test case was ultimately determined upon ; he was to shoot the hare, and I to cook it. Accordingly, a particularly nice one reached me the next day ; but of course I waited till it was *mortifié à point* as the *chef* hath it, and then had it dressed in the manner I shall presently explain for *râble de lièvre*. We decided to have the dish served as the salient feature of our little dinner. It came and was carved, the adjuncts were distributed, and then there followed what Mr. Hayward calls a long ‘flash of silence.’ All conversation ceased, not a word being spoken till the bones of the *râble* were carried away. Then, as we drank a glass each of sound yet unpretentious claret, the arbiter tersely remarked, ‘Well, if we had had a bet over this, I should have lost !’

A little story told by Brillat Savarin illustrates his opinion of the merits of *un levraut rôti*. One day when crossing the Jura Mountains he halted for the night at an inn in the village of Mont-sous-Vaudrey full of apprehension as to his chances of even a fair dinner. To peep into the kitchen, therefore, after

having seen to his horse's comfort, was a most natural step. And what did he find?

'I saw,' so runs the tale, 'something to delight the eyes of a hungry wayfarer. There, on the spit, rapidly approaching perfection, was one of those plump leverets, unknown to men in town, the perfume of which would fill a church. "Good!" exclaimed I to myself, cheered at the sight; "I am not entirely abandoned by Providence. A traveller may gather a flower by the roadside."'

Yes:—roasting is by no means to be condemned provided every care be taken to insure success, and you select a leveret or a hare in its first year not over eight pounds in weight. A doe in her *second* year will be found succulent and tender, be it observed, but not so her brother. The *ráble*, as many of course know, might almost be called the saddle. To obtain it the hare must be cut in two just behind the shoulders, and both legs and thighs removed. Sometimes the thighs are permitted to remain. All the part cut off should be set aside for *civet*, soup, or stew. For eight people two *rábles* would be necessary. In fact, concerning this delicate morsel a *gourmet* might speak even as the Abbé Morellet is said to have spoken regarding a *dinde truffée*:—'*Il faut être deux pour manger une dinde truffée. Je ne fais jamais*

*autrement. J'en ai une aujourd'hui : nous seront deux, la dinde et moi.'*

Remembering that the pieces not used can be turned to excellent account, the cutting of a *râble* is economical rather than otherwise—the shoulders nicely grilled make, for instance, a remarkably pleasant breakfast dish. I recommend that a *râble* should be marinaded, and, contrary to the French custom, that it should be stuffed with the stuffing already given, that it should be barded and wrapped in buttered paper, and that it should be roasted with all the care that the cook would give to a woodcock. The flesh, to be sure, should not be as slightly done as that of that beautiful bird, but it should be juicy, with a pink colour near the bone, as in the case of the pheasant. Twenty-five to thirty minutes will suffice for the operation. French cooks baste to begin with 'drawn' butter, and finish with fresh butter; the English practice is to begin with milk or broth and finish with fresh butter. Mrs. Glasse generously allotted three pints of milk and one pound of butter for this undertaking, and added, 'when the hare hath soaked up all the milk and butter it will be enough.'

It need not be said that the barding must be removed during the last eight minutes, so that the *râble* may be dredged over with flour and salt, and be

browned nicely, the butter basting being liberally conducted. To serve a *râble à la crème* :—as soon as the roasting is finished pour off the butter from the dripping-pan, and add to the gravy that will be found below it four tablespoonfuls of good brown sauce such as I shall next speak of, boil up in a saucepan, skim, add a gill of fresh cream with the squeeze of a lemon, and pour it over the *râble*, serving at once.

Touching adjuncts. Of course there must be a good sauce with a roast hare, the choice of which will always be a matter of taste. Many do very nicely, for, as Grimod de la Reynière said, ‘*Cet aimable animal se met complaisamment à toutes sauces.*’ According to old English custom, something sweet and vinous was the correct thing, the sweetness imparted by red-currant jelly, and the vinosity by port. But of late years refined taste has rebelled against strongly fortified wines in cookery, and such effect as may be desired from the juice of the grape is now got with chablis or sauterne, or, in the case of red wine, with claret. French cooks seem to have always leant towards a sharp sauce for both hare and venison. Thus we continually find *poivrade* prescribed in their books, and this is nothing more than the cooked marinade already referred to, thickened, reduced, skimmed, and finished with white or red wine. Among genuine

English sauces few are better than a good liver sauce, but for this you must sacrifice a most valuable element in the stuffing. I have, nevertheless, found clever game dealers who, if you spoke earnestly to them, would sometimes discover that a hare had *two* livers. *Sauce soubise*, or better still *sauce soubise tomatée*, is to be recommended. The good brown sauce I mentioned *à propos* of the *râble à la crème* may be simply an honest *Espagnole* made on a proper meat-broth basis, but such a sauce will always be vastly improved for service with game when flavoured with a *fumet*, or essence of game.

In well-managed country houses, where game is plentiful throughout the season, there should be no lack of opportunity for the concoction of this valuable flavouring medium, for birds much knocked about, or a hare that has been shot in an ungentlemanly way, will always provide the needful material. The extraction is simple enough :—Cut up the game in small pieces, bones and all, and give them a preliminary fry in butter with a good allowance of minced onion and carrot till beginning to brown, then add a claretglassful of chablis (if the quantity of game stuff be about a pound) and a *bouquet garni*. Continue to cook gently till the moistening is all but exhausted, and then add two gills of good broth ; simmer for an

hour, and strain. This extract will be found most useful in all *entrées* of hare, as well as in sauces. In *salmis* of gamebirds, too, it is, as I have said, a decidedly commendable ingredient.

As for vegetables, potatoes in any of the chippy methods—*pommes de terre soufflées* at the top of the list—and a good salad should suffice. Cold cooked seakale seasoned with pepper and salt, sprinkled with tarragon vinegar, and baptized with pure cream, ‘onion atoms’ or not according to taste (even a *chapon* for a good disciple, perhaps), marries well with roast game ; while an orange salad goes as nicely with a hare as with a wild duck. Peel and divide the orange into its natural quarterings ; with the point of a knife make a small incision on the inside of each to facilitate the squeezing out of the pips ; lay the pieces in a salad bowl, season with salt and pepper, sprinkle with tarragon or elder vinegar, and liberally anoint with oil, adding onion, or not, as in the foregoing. French beans seem to harmonise more perfectly with brown meat than with white, and are of course the natural *garniture* of venison. With the hare they are equally good whether hot as a vegetable, or cold in a salad made precisely on the lines just sketched for orange salad. It is not necessary to insist upon the employment of the very best vinegar, and in very

small quantity, nor to remind the initiated that *haricots verts panachés* are even more acceptable than *haricots verts* alone. There are, of course, other salads which might be mentioned : *Salade de celeri frais*, *salade mignonne*, *salade de légumes*, &c., &c. The selection is obviously a matter of discretion.

There are two ways of cooking a hare whole other than by roasting : (1) by braising, or, as it used to be called, *en daube*. By this method a hare of a doubtful age for treatment in the former manner can be rendered tender and nice to eat. The animal should be prepared as for roasting, the stuffing being carefully attended to ; it should then be placed in a long braising-pan upon a layer of slices of bacon ; sliced vegetables, mushroom peelings, and minced herbs should be laid round it ; and two gills of chablis or sauterne poured over it. The back must be protected by buttered paper, the pan must be closed, a few live coals should be laid on the lid, and it should be set over a low fire, so that the cooking may be as slow as possible. Every now and then basting with good meat broth separately prepared should go on, and when the hare is three parts cooked the *cuisson*, or broth, around it should be strained, and the fat taken off, after which it should be mixed with two gills of Espagnole sauce boiled five minutes and returned to

the pan containing the hare. A couple of dozen mushrooms should be put in, and the slow cooking continued until the hare is ready. Serve with the mushrooms round it and some of the sauce, the rest being presented in a sauce-boat. (2) The other method is that known as '*à la casserole*,' an excellent way of cooking a pheasant or a fowl, as many know. It is simply roasting inside an earthenware *casserole* or *brasière*. The meat must first be set by being turned about in butter at the bottom of the pan over a brisk fire; after which the latter must be closed, and the process carried out either in the oven, or over a low fire with a few coals on the surface of the vessel. Continual basting with specially made meat gravy must be carried on, the pan being covered after each application. A tiny atom of garlic improves the flavour, and rosemary with the thyme and marjoram in the seasoning is recommended.

It is often said that the French *civet de lièvre* and the English jugged hare are virtually the same thing, the only difference being that one is done in a stew-pan, and the other in a covered jar or any closely sealed vessel. But I think that, although each dish is good, there is really no great resemblance between them. A *civet de lièvre*, as served nowadays by a good cook, is a most delicate *ragoût* requiring no little skill

and judgment, while jugged hare may be called a self-cooked stew, which any beginner with a good recipe to follow can manage. In the former the juices of the meat are preserved by preliminary frying, in the latter all the value of the preparation is in the sauce, the meat being as a rule 'done to rags.' The word *civet*, according to Mr. E. S. Dallas, is to be traced to the old French word *cive* or *civette*, the modern equivalent of which is *ciboulette*, in English chive (*Allium Schænoprasum*), and its application to the dish we are discussing indicates that originally chives took the place in the composition now filled by onions. Dubois' *civet*, an excellent illustration of the newest form of treatment, may be given concisely as follows :—Having cut up the hare into neat pieces, season them highly, and marinade them with a few spoonfuls of cognac and a sprinkling of sweet herbs for six or eight hours. Then drain, dry, and fry them over a fast fire in melted bacon fat till thoroughly *saisis*. Dust over now with flour, turn the meat about for a few minutes longer, and then moisten with enough warm broth and red wine to cover, two-thirds of the former to one-third of the latter. The wine should have been boiled beforehand in a non-tinned vessel, or the colour will be affected. Now bring the contents of the stewpan to the boil, and after ten minutes at that temperature

draw the vessel back, set it over moderate heat, adding herbs, sliced onions (half a pound), and mushroom trimmings. Simmer now till the meat is half done, when the vessel should be removed, and the *cuisson* strained off. This having been put into a separate stewpan, should now be turned into a sauce by the addition of strong gravy or glaze, with some more wine, followed by reduction, all fat being skimmed off.

Meanwhile the pieces of meat should be neatly trimmed, and freed from any vegetables that may adhere to them. The sauce being ready, put the meat into it with two dozen neatly trimmed mushrooms, simmer till done, and finish with a *liaison* of the blood of the hare. Dish the *civet* on a flat dish, surrounded by the mushrooms, and as many small onions separately cooked and glazed. Pour the sauce over the meat, and serve. Observe that there is no red-currant jelly in this ; that the wine is claret, not port ; and that spice, at one time so freely administered, does not appear at all.

Touching the use of the blood in various dishes of hare. This, no doubt, is objected to by many people, the bare idea being repulsive to them. It is a pity, perhaps, that no culinary symbol can be invented to disguise the process. The imposture would be pardonable, in view of the effect produced by the

ingredient. The true Scotch *cordon bleu* would despair of producing her celebrated soup if deprived of it, and it appears in nearly every recipe of the French school. Dumas, indeed, has recorded in his 'Grande Dictionnaire de Cuisine' a dish with the gruesome title *levrauts au sang*, for which the blood of five pigeons has to be obtained, in addition to that of the leveret ! The recipe is not worth quoting, being a sort of hotch-potch of pigeon and leveret—in other words, an inartistic blending of two good things which would be infinitely better treated separately.

A few words ought certainly to be said in acknowledgment of the great merit of hare soups. Of these there are three varieties—the thick, the *purée*, and the clear. The first is a decoction of hare in good beef stock, thickened without the addition of meat ; the second like the first, but with the meat of the hare pounded and blended with it ; and the third also made like the first, but, instead of being thickened, clarified, a slight consistency (not to interfere with the clear effect) being imparted by pulverised tapioca or corn-flour. Julienne-like strips of the meat of the hare, and similar strips of freshly-cooked truffles, form the garnish of this remarkably good soup. Claret should be used in the two first-named soups, chablis in the third. The fame of Scotch hare soup has of

course long been established, though there seems to be but little difference between Scotch and English recipes of the old school, and absolutely no difficulty about either. Better flavour may no doubt be obtained from mountain hares, for the reasons already given.

Large quantities of port wine were formerly considered essential in these preparations, with spices, ham, red-currant jelly, ketchup, orange or lemon juice, &c. The great Carême, when *chef* to the Prince Regent, evolved a *potage de lièvre à la St. George*, for the moistening of which he required one bottle of the best champagne, and one of fine claret, with four ladlefuls of pure *consommé*. When presented, this intoxicating fluid was garnished with *escalopes* of hare, *quenelles* of partridge meat, and mushrooms and truffles in slices. But cultivated taste at the present time looks for simplicity in cookery, and the highly overwrought compounds that were once so popular have passed out of fashion. The chief thing in hare soups now is to have a really good meat stock to cook the hare in—‘brothe of fleshe,’ as Richard II.’s cook laid down—to extract the pure flavour of the animal with as few accessories as possible, and to use light French wine in moderate quantity. The back fillets can always be taken for an *entrée*, leaving plenty of material for a good soup.

The hare has always been looked upon in the

kitchen as an important auxiliary in the composition of game pies. It makes an exceedingly good *pâté* by itself in this way :—Take off all the choice meat of the hare and cut it into half-inch squares, do the same with an equal quantity of the best bacon, and marinade the two together as in the case of Dubois' *civet*. Mince the coarser meat and pound it thoroughly, adding to it the preparation of liver, heart and kidneys described for stuffing, four ounces of lean veal, and four of fat of cooked ham ; pound, and pass all through a hair sieve, and bind it with the yolks of three eggs. Line a *terrine* with slices of bacon, and over the lining spread a layer of the pounded mixture or farce, leaving a hollow in the centre to be filled with the marinaded meats. When filled and well pressed down, finish off the top with a layer of the farce and strips of bacon. Cover the *terrine* closely, set it in a shallow vessel with a little hot water round it, put this in a slow oven, and leave it for two hours, renewing the hot water as it evaporates. When done, take out the *terrine*, let it rest a quarter of an hour, then remove the cover, make an incision in the centre of the *pâté* with the blade of a knife, and pour into it a gill of strong *fumet* extracted from the bones and scraps in the manner already mentioned. Cover again, and set it

in a cold place. Truffles can, of course, be packed with the meat, and cooked mushrooms also, the trimmings of both being used in making the *fumet*.

Of *entrées* of hare several pages might be written. A few general remarks must, however, suffice, for my sketch, in so far as processes are concerned, has already become a little too technical. It is, of course, only with the hare's back and delicate under fillets that we have now to deal, out of which a number of dishes can be made :—*Filets, filets mignons, escalopes, noisettes, grenadins, côtelettes*, &c. &c. These may be grilled, *sautés*, crumbed and fried, or braised ; and they may be larded or not according to desire. For their garnish there are, to be sure, truffles, cocks' combs, *financière*, *foies gras*, *fonds d'artichauts*, chestnuts, mushrooms, olives, ham, and so forth. Comparatively lately preserved cherries have been in fashion for this purpose, but their use needs a good deal of care, lest the effect be too sweet. I have had experience more than once of this error, and have even known cases in which the dish might have been better named *compote de cerises au lièvre*, and presented as an *entremets sucré*, the sauce being a syrup and nothing more. *Noisettes de lièvre à la Béarnaise, à la Bordelaise* (with the standard Bordelaise sauce

and dice of beef marrow), *à la Thérèse* (with chopped ham and olives in a transparent sauce, thickened with pulverised tapioca and flavoured with reduced chablis and game *fumet*), and *côtelettes à la Maitland*, may be specially instanced. The last is worth giving in detail as an instance of artistic simplicity. M. Gogué, whose name I have previously mentioned, claims to have invented the dish when filling the position of *chef* to Lord Maitland, '*Ministre de la Marine Anglaise*.' The cutlets are neatly shaped out of the back fillets and finished by the introduction of a bone in each of them—either a chicken pinion bone or one of the ribs of the hare. They are then simply breadcrumbed and fried, and served with a plain brown sauce strongly flavoured with a *fumet* extracted from all the *débris* left of the hare after trimming the cutlets, chablis or sauterne having been used in the making of the essence. M. Gogué does not say that he marinaded or larded the cutlets. I think that both processes would improve matters, the larding to be drawn *through*, not in and out, and snipped off close to the meat with scissors. M. Dumas borrowed this recipe for his '*Grande Dictionnaire*,' but alludes to the author of it, erroneously, as '*M. Legogué*.' Those who like pounded and minced meats in *entrées* can of course indulge themselves with *pain de lièvre* or de

*levraut*, with *boudins*, *quenelles*, *croquettes*, *mousselines*, *timbales*, *crêpinettes*, and so on *ad libitum*, the chief points in every case being the sauce and the garnish, which may of course be much diversified.

Ever since that memorable dish, *chevreau en chevreuil*, which the *cordon bleu* Rebecca composed so well that Isaac was completely deceived by it, cooks have no doubt endeavoured to produce good effects by 'mock' compositions. It is only natural, therefore, that some English genius should have discovered that if a good rump steak be marinaded, stuffed with hare stuffing, rolled up securely, and cooked exactly as a hare, it will be found precisely like the real thing. It is, nevertheless, quite possible that a connoisseur might entertain a different opinion. The only meat I know which might be taken for hare is that of the porcupine, not only in flavour and closeness of grain, but also in appearance, 'which the blacknesse thereof convinceth,' for, contrary to the general impression, it is not white. A young porcupine about half-grown is really a delicacy. Of this a certain veteran who lived on the hills of Southern India was fully aware—a gastronome was he, of the stamp of Grimod de la Reynière, the Marquis de Cussy, Brillat Savarin, and their celebrated set. It is related concerning him that about eleven o'clock one night he

was in bed and asleep, being an early rooster, when he was roused by his faithful major-domo, who, in the pigeon-English of Madras, excused his intrusion as follows : ‘I beg your pardon, Sir, but Captain Johnson done send for master one sucking forkfine, only coming very far in the sun, and little *smelling*, Sir. I am ’fraiding that sometime it will be bad to-morrow. Please what master order?’ ‘A *young* porcupine, Moses, eh?’ answered the General ; ‘very well, roast it at once, and send John to dress me, and, Moses, roselle<sup>1</sup> jelly, remember.’ And in due course he arose, and did eat. Now I hardly think that among those who may plod through my sketch there will be many who would jump up at night, after having dined heartily as usual, to demolish a tender leveret, or test the merits of the daintiest dish among those that I have suggested. All I can hope is, that some of the statistics I have collected may be interesting, and that a hint or two worth noting may be found in my discussion of the various methods of cooking the hare.

<sup>1</sup> A fruit possessing a most pleasant sub-acid flavour.



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